

THE WELSH PULPIT OF TO-DAY.

WORKS

BY THE

REV. J. CYND DYLAN JONES.



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THE
WELSH PULPIT OF TO-DAY.

SERMONS BY WELSH MINISTERS.

First Series.

EDITED BY THE
REV. J. CYNDDYLAN JONES.

Third Edition.

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PREFATORY NOTE.

Most sections of the Christian Church in Wales are represented in this volume. The points of union between them are infinitely more numerous and important than the points of difference.

Each author is only responsible for the views he himself expresses. But I flatter myself that no view is advanced from beginning to end in which all the writers would not heartily concur.

The denominational wall of separation in Wales is based in sentiment and association rather than in doctrine and conviction. All earnest men desire closer union, for of Wales it is specially true that division is weakness, whilst "union is strength."

With two or three exceptions, these sermons were composed and delivered in the Welsh language to purely Welsh-speaking congregations—

for the English congregations are few and far between—without any ulterior view to publication. They may therefore be taken as a trustworthy index to the real calibre of the vernacular ministry.

The translations in some instances were done by the authors, but in the majority of cases the whole responsibility falls upon the editor alone.

That this volume may receive God's blessing, and commend itself to His people, is my earnest prayer.

J. CYNDDYLAN JONES.

CARDIFF, *May 8, 1885.*

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INTRODUCTORY ESSAY.



OF late years there is observable in Welsh life a very remarkable revival of national feeling. It differs, however, from the patriotic outbursts of past centuries, in that the latter originated in a feeling of exclusiveness and intense dislike of the Saxon and all his ways, whilst the present movement aims at comprehensiveness, and is founded on a sincere desire to take our place, shoulder to shoulder, with the English and Scotch.

Provincial ministers labour under great disadvantages in respect of publicity in comparison with their metropolitan brethren, in consequence of the centralisation of the religious press, for good or for evil, in one city. London public men have their words and deeds blazoned abroad all over the world, whilst provincial men of equal calibre, mental, moral, and spiritual, live and die in comparative obscurity. Men standing on the top of a pyramid, towards which all eyes are turned, are

seen from a greater distance than men of equal physical development standing at the base. Are not country ministers often surprised and pleased to find a comrade of theirs only a year or two before starring it before London audiences, and his words reported and commented upon in half-a-dozen newspapers? Angelo in a well-known picture makes one of his figures stand on a stone in order to give him greater prominence.

If that be true of English-speaking ministers in provincial towns in England, how much truer is it of Welsh ministers, who are separated, not only from the great English world, but from the greater civilised world, by the barrier of language. John Jones, Talysarn, Henry Rees, Edward Morgan: the English public know nothing of them, even English ministers have never heard their names; yet I hazard the statement, without fear of contradiction, that neither England nor Scotland produced grander preachers this century. Did they use the English language as the vehicle of their thought, all the country would be ringing with their fame. But size is not greatness. Athens was smaller than some of our Welsh towns, yet what illustrious men that city produced—little in nothing save the number of its inhabitants.

A dwarf apple-tree in a garden of my childhood

happened one year to grow but one apple, but what an apple! The little tree threw all its vitality into the production of that *one*, which, however, made it memorable in the neighbourhood for years. And the Welsh are a feeble folk, a conquered race, which long fretfully chafed under the foreign yoke, which they were too weak to shake off and too proud to submit to contentedly,—the fire has not quite died out of the blood yet. And in despair of gaining the wild liberty it was accustomed to, and consequently of excelling in the arts and sciences that invariably accompany liberty, it threw all the fiery impetuosity of its nature in the direction of the pulpit, into the production of the sermon. And all critics, competent to pronounce a judgment, must confess that it comes behind, in this particular, none of its larger and stronger sister-nations. Nature and grace, ambition for celebrity and desire for usefulness, combined to make the pulpit the one great force in Welsh life, for it was the only outlet the nation could find for its pent-up energy. How far the pulpit succeeded in the great aim of all honest Christian labour, let the country's immunity from crime answer, and the consequent holiday Her Majesty's judges enjoy in their tour of the Welsh circuits.

These remarks are not unnecessary. For how

is it no English publisher ever thought it worth his while to offer the public a volume of translations from the Welsh? Translations from the French and German, and importations from America, abound; but the Welsh pulpit has been quite overlooked. The unknown is always deemed worthless. Only last week reference was made in a public conference in London to the inferior training of Welsh ministers as an obstacle to union with their English-speaking brethren. To that dictum I respectfully but firmly demur. As if we were strangers to learning because we speak Welsh! The ministerial training of the Welsh of the present generation, if by that is understood the training requisite to render them efficient ministers of the New Testament, is, judged by its fruit, equal to that of any other nation, whilst the process of weeding out the candidates who are not endowed with the gift of facile expression and elegant speech is applied with ruthless rigour, especially in certain sections of the Church of Christ in Wales. That some chaff gets mixed with the wheat, however severe the process of winnowing, is not to be denied. But as a class Welsh ministers are industrious, painstaking, intelligent men, voracious readers, good speakers. Of any one who has read this volume I would ask—Do the Welsh

ministers move in a lower plane of thought than their English and Scotch neighbours? Do they betray ignorance of, or lack of sympathy with, the great currents of thought in the world of mind? Does their theology lack depth, breadth, and, what is very much despised in some English quarters these days, soundness? Is not literature, ancient and modern, enlisted by them in the service of the Gospel quite as much, if not more, than in the contemporary pulpit of other parts of the United Kingdom? And be it remembered that these sermons were not composed with a view to publication or criticism, but are a fair average specimen of the religious teaching administered in the vernacular all the year round.

Theology still occupies a prominent place in the Welsh pulpit—not controversial but Scriptural theology. Controversy raged in our country sixty years ago, but the last whiff of smoke has long disappeared. I remember seeing, in my earlier years, a few clouds hovering on the horizon; but they were white clouds, emptied of their thunders and lightnings, and adding to the picturesqueness of the scene. A stiff controversial breeze, some think, might do much good in the present day by clearing the atmosphere of our churches of the sultriness a long calm inevitably begets, and brac-

ing our young people, who have not seen war, to more arduous duties and a more diligent application to Biblical studies. But the decay of theology has not proceeded with anything like the same rapidity in Wales as in England. At all events, no one can insert an advertisement in the newspapers in respect of the Welsh churches as was recently done in connection with an influential section of English Nonconformity, "Wanted—a Theology." No ; the great landmarks of doctrine are still visible. We believe that the philosophy of progress consists not in the demolition, but in the utilisation, of the labours of the great believers of the past.

Notwithstanding the able books which have issued from the English and Scottish Press, by men whose names are household words wherever the English language is spoken, books discussing the great doctrine of the Atonement, I have no hesitation in saying that by far the profoundest contribution that has been made of late years to the theology of that doctrine has been by a Welsh minister in the Welsh language. Had that book been written in German it would have long ago been translated into English. The relation of Religion and Science has of late been a fruitful theme for writers, and many valuable

suggestions have been made; but a fairer and more masterly treatment of the Spencerian philosophy in its relation to Christianity than the published reports of lectures delivered by a Welsh minister in the Welsh language to a class of Welsh mechanics and clerks, it has not been my good fortune to see. It is a loss to the theological literature of the day that these works are not presented to the world in an English garb. But lest the English readers of this essay suspect I am over-colouring the present state of theology in "poor little Wales," to use Mr. Gladstone's pet name, I will direct their attention to a bulky volume just published in English by another Welshman, who preaches in Welsh to Welsh congregations every Sunday, entitled "A Commentary on 1st Corinthians." Every unprejudiced reader will, I think, admit that in scholarship and exegesis it falls not behind the best commentaries of the day, not excepting those of Canon Westcott and Bishop Lightfoot, and that in theological grasp and philosophical insight it occupies a position almost unique. Let my English readers test this statement by practical proof. But it is not given to any man to be far ahead of his generation; and the fact that these criticisms are the outcome of the ministerial training administered to Welsh

students, and that the deep and fresh theology the book contains has been preached to Welsh congregations in town and country, on hills and in valleys, is a practical evidence of the present state of theology in the Welsh churches.

Christmas Evans is perhaps the only Welsh preacher with whom the English public are acquainted, because of the salient points in his character which even strangers could in some measure seize; and he has been portrayed to them in a wild rhapsodical panegyric rather than in a sober, discriminating spirit. We feel much obliged to our well-meaning, well-disposed friends who write up our Welsh preachers without any knowledge of them except what they gather at second, or, perhaps, twentieth, hand. We thank them for their kind intentions and endeavours to make up, to the best of their ability, our lack of service. Florid but misleading delineations, however, of our great preachers—for they are the only things great we possess—the Welsh nation does not desire. Not compliments but justice we want, both from the English Government and the English Press. But Christmas Evans was by no means a typical preacher. In style he was as unique in his own country as in England, and in allegory without a rival, which was the secret of the tremendous power he wielded over his

congregations. But the Welsh Pulpit on the whole is quite free from romance, giving sound, wholesome theology the prominent place it deserves. Healthy substantial food is always served the congregations the first half of the sermon; from there on condiments and confectioneries—milk and honey—are gradually added to tickle and, if possible, to please the palate of the spiritual man. And this custom is so long established, and the congregations are so habituated to it, that there is general murmuring if the “sweet things” are not presented before the conclusion. Metaphors as a rule are kept in strict subordination to truth; the congregations will not allow the Cross to be hid under flowers, however beautiful the colour and sweet the perfume. Flowers *round* the Cross, but not *on* the Cross, is, I believe, the prevalent rule among our ministers. Symptoms of deterioration have, however, of late years appeared in the ministry of the weaker brethren. Since the first visit of the American revivalists to our shores, a marked tendency has set in to make pretty little anecdotes—sometimes pathetic and sometimes laughable—serve the place of sound Gospel truth. But our best men, whilst by no means averse to anecdotes where they *illustrate*, not *supersede*, the truth, are convinced that if the

"old, old story of Jesus and His love" will not soften the heart and convert the will, no stories of little girls dying at home or stalwart soldiers dying on the field will serve the purpose. They may soften the feelings of the natural man, but they tend not to conversion or edification.

Still the chief distinction of Welsh ministers consists in the warmth of their emotions and the vigour of their delivery. The agile Celts have, it has been said, been more abundantly endowed with the gift of utterance than the more phlegmatic Teutons—a theory which may or may not be true. But there can be no question that the Welshman possesses a great deal of "fire," and that that fire is easily fanned to a flame, which gives him considerable popularity on the public platform. "Welsh fire" has passed into a colloquialism. Sometimes it is strange fire perhaps, sometimes stolen fire, sometimes painted fire; but at all events the Welshman insists on fire. A cold, formal, essay-like sermon, in which the niceties of grammar are more studied than the niceties of theology, and delivered in a finical, superfine style he turns away from with loathing. A manuscript in the pulpit is his soul's abomination. No one enjoys more than he the refinements of diction and the tropes of elocution; these have been from

of old the inseparable appendages of the Welsh Pulpit, but they must gush fresh from the heart like water from the mountain spring. He must have heat as well as light, pathos as well as truth. In Scriptural phraseology — the preacher must "truth it in love." If a man has not sufficient mastery of his subject, and sufficient command of himself and of language, to deliver his message straight from the heart, without the help of paper, he is told to resort to the schoolmaster's stool or the merchant's desk. The numerous religious services and the frequent preaching tours the Welsh ministers make, give them a kind of confidence in addressing public assemblies, and a kind of ease in their command of language, to which ordinary English preachers are perfect strangers.

The first English sermon it was my privilege to hear was by Dr. Urwick, if I rightly remember the name, who, I afterwards understood, had won considerable *éclat* as a theologian in a controversy on the proper divinity of Christ. He began rather loud, in a clear, ringing voice, which led me as an inexperienced boy to anticipate a rare treat. But I observed that, different from the Welsh preachers small and great, he grew calmer and more subdued as he proceeded, his voice waxing thinner, smaller, and beautifully less, and what began as a thunder

ended as a whisper. The wise men of the congregation commended the sermon much, and they were all too wise to confess they did not understand the preacher's vocabulary; but the style struck me as differing widely from that of all the Welsh preachers I had ever heard: that is why it made a deeper impression on the memory than scores of sermons I have heard subsequently and understood better. The Welsh style seems to have been modelled on Dr. Leifchild's famous prescription—"Begin low, proceed slow; rise higher, take fire," &c. The preacher begins quietly, calmly, almost carelessly, in a low pitch, too low to be heard without an undue straining of the acoustic nerves, a fault, by the by, which it is hoped the rising generation will take care to remedy. No expectations are raised by the preacher's manner, unless previously excited by the preacher's reputation. As he proceeds the delivery gains in rapidity and animation, the face grows brighter and more illuminated, the gesticulation becomes freer and more graceful. The purely intellectual part is now finished, the part in which he has been trying to carry conviction to the understanding. Here the preacher pulls up, and as it were remembers that man is not all understanding, that he has a heart as well as a head. Whilst not relinquishing his hold on the intellect, he now

seeks to win his way to the heart. The voice is raised, it is gradually developed into its full compass, and advantage is taken of all the musical notes at the speaker's command, melting strains in the minor key are poured forth, for the Welshman is never satisfied with a sermon unless it has fetched tears to the eye, and oftentimes we have seen large congregations weeping copiously and simultaneously, sometimes audibly but oftener silently, under certain bewitching touches and mournful cadences in the preacher's delivery. But again there comes a slight change in the method and the aim of the speaker. The understanding has been addressed, the heart partly or wholly subdued. But man possesses something besides intellect and affections, he has conscience; and the victory of the Gospel is never complete till the conscience has been touched. For the last five or ten minutes the preacher, whilst keeping his hold of the understanding and the heart, tries to storm the conscience, and usually concludes a few minutes short of the hour, though the great masters of the assembly on great occasions prolong the discourse to the hour and a half. And during the last half-hour is seen the immense advantage of husbanding the strength at the commencement, for now they are able to use advantageously every atom of strength, physical and

mental, they possess, to drive home the truth. As a rule, the delivery is characterised by more variety of intonation and greater modulation of voice than that of the great preacher of the Tabernacle, whilst it avoids the sudden extremes, the alternate leonine roars and the *hiss-ing whiss-pers* of the well-known orator of the City Temple.

That all Welsh preachers do not possess the above qualities in the same degree goes without saying; that some of them possess them in no degree is also possible. But as a class they are characterised by facility of speech and warmth of feeling. But though they all, or nearly all, understand English as well as Welsh, they cannot reasonably be expected to show the same readiness of utterance, the same copiousness of diction, and the same elegance of style in an acquired language, which they are seldom called upon to use save intermittently in private life and in their studies, as in their mother tongue, the language of the hearth and of the sanctuary, the language of their infancy and their manhood. Indeed, some of the best Welsh preachers resolutely decline to speak publicly in English, not because they are not able to read, write, and speak it in private with commendable accuracy, but because they pain their own sense of propriety by their inability, through

lack of exercise, to give the language the graceful curves and the rainbow colours they have trained themselves to impart to their native Welsh. By entirely laying aside their own language, they come in the course of years to wield the Saxon tongue with a dexterity and ease which captivate the bred and born Englishman. The late Thomas Jones, of Swansea, is an instance. Large, cultured congregations were often bewitched by the magical beauty of his language, notwithstanding the slight Welsh accent; but to acquire this marvellous skill he had to entirely lay aside the language of his fatherland, and even then he never gained the same rich exuberance of colour as he did as a Welsh preacher. To cultivate at the same time a good flowing natural style in two languages, so diametrically opposed in their idioms, is a difficult, if not an impossible, task. Men like the present writer, who are called upon by the exigencies of the hour to preach one day in Welsh, the next in English, and oftentimes in both languages in the same service, know by experience how hard it is to maintain purity in either, and are often tempted to abandon one altogether; and certainly did they think more of style than of duty, of reputation than of usefulness, they would have long ago adopted such a course, and become either exclusively English or

exclusively Welsh preachers. But the voice of duty must be obeyed. We therefore bow willingly to the inevitable, and make the best use we can of the two languages in the present critical, transitional state of the country, if by any means we may win some.

As already stated, it is the earnest desire of Welsh ministers to draw closer the bonds of union between us and our English and Scotch brethren, and not stand aloof in cold isolation, as has been too much the case heretofore. How far this closer union will affect our ethnological traits cannot now be predicted. Meanwhile our wish is to work for Christ in the sphere wherein we are placed, proud of our Celtic nature, proud of our Celtic language. But the signs of the times seem to indicate that our nature will cling to us longer than our language; and if need be we will offer up the latter—one of the finest languages for oratorical purposes that has ever quivered on the lips of man—on the altar of Christianity. We have refused to give it up for commerce' sake, for reputation's sake, for England's sake; but we will, if need be, give it up for Christ's sake.

THE EDITOR.

P.S.—It is my purpose, in a subsequent volume, to analyse the more spiritual elements that constitute the strength of the Welsh Pulpit.

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"—ROM. v. 20.

THE WELSH PULPIT OF TO-DAY.

THE LIFE OF JESUS.

BY THE REV. J. CYNDDYLAN JONES, CARDIFF.

"And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but His mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man."—ST. LUKE ii. 51, 52.

THE visit to the Temple is the only event recorded in the life of Jesus from His early infancy till His appearing unto Israel in His official capacity as the Messiah. It has pleased God to draw the veil over the early career of His Son in the world. Why it pleased Him, it is too difficult for us positively to tell. One reason, perhaps, may be this: that only developed humanity, only mature manhood, is adequate to reveal the Father. A God-infant, or a God-boy, could not be a meet revelation of the Highest—only a God-man could. But though we are not favoured with any incident in His infancy till the age of twelve, yet we find the principle that regulated and animated that period pointed out in verse 40—"And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was

upon Him." The Holy Spirit took care to indicate the principle at the root of His life up to the age of twelve. And though nothing is recorded from His boyhood to His manhood—from twelve to thirty—except this one story; yet the principle which inspired and hallowed that period is laid down in verse 52—"And He increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man." Now the principle ought to make up for the lack of facts, it ought to compensate for the absence of facts, for facts are only valuable as they serve to disclose principles.

But let us look a little more narrowly at the words I have read as a text. They appear to me to be a complete, concise summary of His early history. He is here presented to us in *domestic* life, for He dwelt with His parents and was subject unto them. He is here presented to us in *social* life, for He went down with them, and came to Nazareth—His home was in a town. He is here presented to us in *industrial* life, for the text, taken in connection with other passages in the Gospel history, clearly implies that during the eighteen years He spent at Nazareth, after His return from the present feast, He worked at the trade of His reputed father Joseph. He is finally presented to us in His temple or *religious* life, for we see Him in His Father's house, deeply absorbed in His Father's business.

I. JESUS CHRIST IN HOME LIFE.

"And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them."

1. We see Him settling down to the *relationships* of

home. Notwithstanding the glorious truth of His Divine Sonship, which only lately shone on Him in all its splendour, and the vivid interest He evidently felt in all that pertained to His heavenly Father's house, yet He went down to Nazareth and dwelt in the humble home of His earthly parents. He would not by His conduct break up the home or in any way mar its happiness. To many the home does not present a sphere large enough for their ambition; they break away from the domestic circle, and enter upon a larger field, "and the field is the world." Home means to them only a place to eat and drink and sleep in. It is not the abode of the heart, the dwelling-place of the affections. But Jesus Christ was perfectly content in the home circle. He did not complain of its narrowness and confinement. For He did not judge life by its magnitude, but by the principle which animates it; He did not judge life by its conspicuousness; but by the spirit which inspires it. The tiny speck on the lady-bird's wing is as round a circle as that of the world. The sphere which a tear makes is as mathematically perfect as that of yonder sun. It makes not the slightest difference in the real merit of a book whether it is printed in large or small type; in either case the meaning is precisely the same. Some people seriously object to the privacy of home—the type is too small to please their fancy; they must act their part on the public stage, in the corners of the streets, and in the synagogues—they dearly love a large type. But the Saviour spent thirty years in the privacy of home, and never once complained of its narrowness and obscurity. And surely if the God-man found room

enough to exercise all His graces therein, it ought to check our impatience at its restraints.

"The trivial round, the common task,
May furnish all we ought to ask,—
Room to deny ourselves, a road
To bring us daily nearer God."

2. We are further taught that He faithfully discharged the *duties* of home—the duties which devolved on him as a son in the family. Each member of the family has its respective services to perform, and harmony always depends upon the right adjustment, the proper balancing, of distinct interests. A very delicate thing is the balance—in the words of another, one more handful of dust on this side of the planet might seriously disturb the equilibrium of the universe. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them." He might have been wiser than they; but superior knowledge does not justify insubordination. You may be endowed with a clearer and farther-reaching insight into the laws of political economy than those at the helm of public affairs; but you have not the shadow of a right to use your superior knowledge to create mutiny on board and sink the ship of state. You have a perfect right to use your superior knowledge to alter the laws, but not to break them. And you, young people, may be wiser than your aged and decrepid parents; but you have no right to pit your wisdom against their authority. Jesus Christ showed His superior knowledge by cordially acquiescing in the home institution. The word usually applied to Him is "wisdom;"

and if your knowledge is wisdom you will use it, not to vex and annoy your aged parents, but to love, cherish, and obey them. Knowledge as such has no principle. It will beat ploughshares into swords or swords into ploughshares; it will convert church-bells into cannons or cannons into church-bells; it will edit the "Age of Reason" or print the New Testament; it will navigate a corsair's vessel or steer a missionary's ship; it will astonish doctors in the temple or return home to insult a parent. See that you coin your knowledge into wisdom; for the knowledge which is not wisdom will annoy and vex, but the knowledge which is wisdom will honour and soothe. See that you devote your learning to enhance the happiness and multiply the comforts of the old people at home, and to smooth before them the road that leads to the grave; for you will soon be deprived of the opportunity of showing them either kindness or cruelty. "He was subject unto them."

3. And the context shows that in all this He was doing His *Father's work*. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's work?" And if home life were not an integral department of that work, it would have been utterly impossible for Jesus Christ to have submitted to it. But home life is a Divine life, a type, possibly, of the inner life of the Godhead. The Bible represents God as a Father, it describes Him as having a family, it sets Him forth as having a home. All that is figurative, you say. I beg your pardon, it is not figurative if by figurative you mean visionary; it is real. A vital principle in the interpretation of the Scriptures is this:

God never borrows of man, but man always borrows of God; the earth never lends to Heaven, but Heaven always lends to the earth. If the same term is applied to both God and man, then I infer it belongs originally to God, and only derivatively to man. The Divine Fatherhood is not a figure of the earthly, but the earthly of the heavenly. The Divine Fatherhood is a reality; the home, therefore, is mystically divine. And the tendency of the home is Godward; it serves to refine the affections, and make the face of the earth like the face of heaven. The love which parents almost invariably bear their offspring appears to me to be one of the chiefest checks on the spread of corruption. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son," "not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." And out of the riches of the same love He gives His other little sons and daughters to the world continually, "not to condemn the world, but that the world through them might be saved"—they also are saviours in their measure and proportion. The "only begotten Son" is a Saviour in a pre-eminent degree and in quite a unique sense; but the other little sons and daughters of the Highest are also saviours in their own degree and after their own way—they keep individuals and families from petrifying into selfishness. You may remember how the navvies, who had been employed in the construction of the Pacific Line of Railway, and been for months toiling hundreds of miles away from the nearest civilised settlement, melted into tears at the sight of a baby in the first passengers' train that passed along the line, and how they rushed up to the carriage door

and craved permission of the lady to kiss the little darling; and how, passing him round amid their tears and laughter, they each and all printed a gentle tender kiss on its soft dimpled cheek. Yes, every child calls forth a certain amount of love to welcome and protect it; and Love is always a Saviour—it helps to keep the world from sinking into moral insensibility and spiritual callousness. Home life is a divine life, and by serving it we do God's work.

II. JESUS CHRIST IN SOCIAL LIFE.

“He went down with them, and came to Nazareth.” His home was in a town. To forsake the courts of the Temple, and go and dwell in the half-heathenish village of Nazareth was a “going down” in more senses than one. Jesus Christ was always “going down” in this world; His course from first to last was downward. The manger of the ox was low enough, but the cross of the malefactor was lower. “He went *down* with them, and came to Nazareth.”

I. Here we see Him settling down to the *relationships* of society, and that the most corrupt society in the whole world. In so far as situation and scenery were concerned, Nazareth would have ranked among the choicest towns of Palestine; but its inhabitants were notorious far and near for their impiety, recklessness, and heathenism. “Every prospect pleases, and only man is vile.” “Can any good come out of Nazareth?” Strange that God should choose depraved Nazareth to be the dwelling-place of His Son for thirty years! We would have imagined that a select and secluded spot would have been chosen

where He would have been kept from all contact with sin, and where He would have been partitioned off from other children, and thus secured against the contagion of evil. But that was not God's idea of holiness. Glasshouse virtue He did not covet. For the dove to keep her wing pure and unsullied amid the free air of heaven is not so very difficult—indeed the difficulty is to soil it; but to keep it white and clean among the pots is quite another matter, and harder far to accomplish. From early infancy Jesus Christ had to face vice; from the outset He had to grapple with sin. His virtue must be sinewy, manly, tried, and triumphant. He must “grow in wisdom and in favour with God and men,” not in a richly cultivated and well-protected enclosure, or men will ascribe His incomparable excellence to the advantageousness of His position, but in the wild open common, where it will be patent to all that His untarnished beauty is not adventitious and accidental, but inherent and radical.

Earthly parents may here learn a very precious lesson: not to put too much confidence in glasshouse virtue—it generally withers on its first exposure to the rude winds of the world. Children may be ruined in one of two ways: either by being permitted to visit all kinds of wicked places and witness all manner of obscene spectacles without let or hindrance; or by being kept too strictly aloof from all society and guarded too narrowly against the approach of other children, for when the protection is withdrawn, as withdrawn it surely must be, and they are left to fight for themselves, they will almost necessarily succumb to the first assault of temptation.

You may grow oaks in conservatories, but not hearts of oak. Trees under glass make wood faster than fibre; and however symmetrical they look to the eye, they will never yield a man-of-war to her Majesty's navy. Hearts of oak grow only in the open fields and on the wild Norwegian heights, where they have to weather the winter, brave the tempest, and gather strength out of the turmoil of the elements. And conservatory children may be very pleasing to look at so long as they are under shelter; but the first storm will make a sad havoc among their branches. Let children learn from the first how to defend themselves against physical and moral foes alike. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth;" and there, in the vicinity of evil, "grew in favour with God and men."

The science primers of the day teach us that there are two kinds of magnet. One kind is steel. Hold it over a heap of rubbish, pass it through, carry it round, and it will draw to itself all the needles and nails and filings and whatever has in it the nature of iron. The other kind is wax. Take a stick of wax, rub it on your coat-sleeve or on the table-cloth, and there is imparted to it a power to attract; but its attraction is very different from the first. Hold it over the same heap of dust as before, pass it through, carry it round, and it will fail to draw to itself the bits of iron that may lie concealed therein; the needles and nails and iron filings will all lie motionless and dead; but should there be in it any clippings and shavings, any fibres and feathers, they will all cling tenaciously to its little head. And every child is turned out to the world a magnet of some sort;

and better far for parents to endeavour to impart to them the right attraction than to be always at it clearing their surroundings. The fact is, you cannot clear their surroundings in a country so thickly populated as Great Britain; you cannot cut them off from all contact with vice and irreligion; but I will tell you what you can do—you can impart to them the right attraction. Some children are steel magnets: they draw to themselves all that is solid and valuable and precious. Others are only wax magnets: they attract only the clippings and shavings, the fibres and feathers, of society; they have affinity with everything that is frivolous and absurd. Place them in the cleanest-swept and best-garnished sphere possible, and they will draw to themselves all the base rubbish of the neighbourhood. Parents, spend less time in removing from the way of your children things obnoxious and hurtful, for in spite of your strictest vigilance they will come across them sooner than you anticipate; and spend more time in instilling into their minds principles which have no affinity with such things. Seek to make them steel magnets, and not wax ones. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth," and yet entirely escaped the slightest taint of evil. "He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth."

2. We further learn that He discharged with the utmost fidelity the *duties* of society, the duties that devolved upon Him as a citizen of Nazareth. "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth," and there, adds the Evangelist very significantly, "He grew in favour with God and men."

I confess to a strong liking for the phrase that "He

grew in favour with men." The time was to arrive when men would show Him no favour, and grant Him no quarter, when His own townsmen would lead Him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong. But during His private residence at Nazareth He succeeded in winning the favour of men—He knew what it was to luxuriate in the golden opinions of His neighbours. And let none of you, young people, despise the favour of men; to please society is not altogether an unworthy aim. Are you then to follow the lead of Public Opinion? Certainly not; Public Opinion should never be allowed to take the lead, but you must not therefore infer that it is shut out of the procession altogether. It has a place, and ought to have a place, in your thoughts, though not the chief one. Favour with God must precede favour with men. Jesus grew in favour with God first, with men afterwards: let this furnish you with a rule for your life. Please God first; let that be your highest aim. Please men next; let that occupy a subordinate position. And if they ever come in conflict, the lower must give way to the higher. For thirty years Jesus Christ found them beautifully to coincide; but in the latter part of His life He found them widely to diverge. But He did not hesitate which path to pursue; so long as circumstances permitted, "He followed peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;" but when peace with men and holiness in the sight of God began to clash, He flung away peace and firmly clung to holiness. And if it lie in your power to grow in favour with God and men, it is your stringent duty to do so. To pain

your fellow-creature needlessly is unpardonable rudeness. Some Christians, alas! have a foolish idea that to be upright in character, they must be downright in speech; that to speak the truth, they must do it rudely, bluntly, uncouthly. But truth should never be blunt—it should be sharp and shining and smooth like a soldier's sword. "The wisdom that is from above is gentle," ladylike. And if at any time circumstances make it imperative that you should use the lance, you may as well imitate Jonathan, and first take the precaution of dipping it in honey—it will do its work none the worse for it.

"He grew in favour with men." This supposes that He was studious of the little proprieties of every-day life. There are men who cling with indomitable tenacity to the fundamental verities; rather than relax their hold of them, they will go cheerfully to the stake to die. But they are culpably regardless of the little politenesses of social intercourse—they never grow in favour with men. They remind one of a rugged granite rock, firm, solid, and white under the meridian light; but no flower grows in its clefts, no snowdrop or fox-glove, no primrose or daisy, softens the untarnished hardness. They are men of strong principles, but of ungracious disposition; they never grow in favour with men. But Jesus Christ, besides holding firmly to the great principles, paid attention to the little urbanities of life; He did not deem them beneath His notice. It is not beneath the notice of the sweet briar to emit fragrance; it is not beneath the notice of the rainbow to look beautiful; and it was not beneath the notice of Jesus Christ to be genial and kind. And I can-

didly confess that I am daily more enamoured with what may be called the minor traits of His character. I see wonderful calibre in the momentous and critical events of His life; but the sweet graces, the subtle elegances, which continually reveal themselves on the most ordinary occasions, impress my soul more deeply still. They are like the evanescent hues of silk, too delicate and shadowy to be handled; from every fresh standpoint they reveal a new shade, yet every shade is unspeakably beautiful. We can no more catch them and discuss them verbally in the pulpit than we can catch sunbeams and exhibit them to your view in well-assorted bundles. Rénan is surely right in divining this to be one reason why in every age and clime women become so fondly attached to His person and character. They instinctively perceive the subtle beauties of His life and are fascinated. We see more of one's real character and inner disposition in the casual look of the eye, the sudden smile of the mouth, the incidental remark of the tongue, the constantly alternating lights and shades of the countenance—the innumerable evanescent expressions of the whole man—than in any conscious effort to accomplish an extraordinary task. Great things may tell you what a man can *do*; little things tell you best what a man *is*. Look at this wondrous universe. You see it stretching away into the distant and the vast; you see it also descending into the little and the minute. When you want to prove what God can do, you point to the great and the bulky; you descant on the loftiness of the firmament, the magnitude of worlds, the sublimity

of mountains, and the roar of thunders. But when you want to show what God is, you confine yourself to the tiny and the minute; you speak of the daisies and their tints, the birds and their songs, the insects and their organisms. In the great we see what God can do; in the little what He is. Give me a rose and give me a comet; which do you recommend me to take as an index to the Divine Heart? Not the comet, but the rose. The fiery world with its tail of flame, rushing headlong through the sky, as if commissioned to set the universe on fire, tells us in impressive eloquence of some awful glory that is hidden in God. But the rose and its softness, its leaves and their fragrance, its tints and their delicacy, tell me in strains sweeter and more captivating of what I may expect to find in His heart. A God who could conceive a rose, and create a rose, and paint a rose, and perfume a rose, must be a Being of infinite pathos and indescribable delicacy. A Jove could never be the Maker of a rose; there must be some correspondence between the cause and the effect. Now Jesus Christ might daily perform miracles and thus increase in the *admiration* of men; it was only by attending to the little elegances of social intercourse He could grow in their *favour*. By His questions and answers He astonished doctors in the Temple; by His gentleness and tenderness He pleased the inhabitants of Nazareth. Greatness, cleverness, power, scholarship, dazzle; the gentle feminine virtues only can win your affections and obtain your good wishes. "He grew in favour with men." I feel very grateful for this verse. Christ on the mountain-side delivering sermons, Christ

on board ship stilling storms, Christ driving devils helter-skelter out of humanity, Christ on the brink of the grave speaking a word that penetrates the eternities and disturbs the cemeteries of the world,—all that reveals to me the character of the Public Teacher. But Christ growing in favour with the rude inhabitants of a Galilean village shows me what kind of man He was in private life, what kind of friend He was in His native town, what kind of companion He was in His own home.

3. And in leading the life of a citizen the context shows He was doing the *work* of God. "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" If there is a must in it, it is evident He cannot leave it; and that in going down to Nazareth He continued to be about it. The truth is, society is a Divine institution; and in serving it, we do God's work. Jesus Christ lived in Nazareth to realise the Divine idea of a citizen, to reduce to actuality, to embody in a life, the thought as it existed in the Divine mind. Men had to see the perfect life acted out before their eyes. He was not of the world—not of it in its way of thinking, not of it in its way of feeling, not of it in its way of living; not of it, yet in it. And as He was, so are we,—placed in the midst of society, and yet of a Divine citizenship. The highest ideal of Christian life is city life. "Ye are a city set on a hill." The life of innocent humanity was a garden or rural life. "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and put man there." It was a free, simple, country life. "But ye are come to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem," and your life henceforth must be city life. Archbishop Trench,

contrasting the city of the New Testament with the garden of the Old, points out the expensiveness of the former—a city costs more to make than a garden, the redeemed life of humanity has made greater demands upon the riches of the Divine Love than primeval life. That no doubt is true; but it appears to me that the chief point of the contrast lies, not in the costliness, but in the quality of the life suitable for each. City life is a higher type than country life; it is a more advanced development; it demands greater polish and self-control. Thus Humanity is progressing notwithstanding the multitudinous obstacles of sin. We began in Genesis in a garden, we end in the Apocalypse in a town; we began in Genesis in a field, we finish in Revelation in a city. Christian life is a social life, and by serving it we do God's work.

III. JESUS CHRIST IN INDUSTRIAL LIFE.

“He went down with them, and came to Nazareth,” and there He dwelt from the age of twelve till His appearing to Israel at the age of thirty. And no doubt the conscience of Christendom is right in concluding that He did not spend the intervening years in indolence, that He diligently worked at the trade of His foster-father Joseph. One of the ecclesiastical fathers, Justin Martyr, I believe, mentions that His chief employment consisted in making ploughs for the agriculturists of the surrounding country. “Is not this the carpenter?” once asked His fellow-citizens in blank astonishment. Oh, infinite condescension! The world looks back with wonder and admiration on Peter the Great stepping

down from the throne of all the Russias, and doffing His imperial robes, to work as an artizan in the dock-yards of England and Holland, that He might give a salutary example to his subjects, and be able to impart to them solid instruction in the important department of ship-building. But what think ye of Him who left the Throne of glory for the workshop of the Nazarene carpenter? What think ye of Him who is the Maker and Builder of the Universe stooping to manufacture ploughs for the farmers of Palestine? What think ye of Him who with His compass marked the orbits of the planets, and with His hand sent the stars spinning through infinite space, bending at the journeyman's bench and executing the orders of His own creatures? Let the heavens wonder and the earth be glad, for in His condescension is our life.

1. By thus entering into industrial life He shows that work may be made *sacred*. His work was as sacred as His preaching — His ploughs were as holy as His sermons. Open your monthly periodicals, and you often come across such a heading as this—"The Divinity of Work." Certainly the work of the ministry can claim nothing more sacred than that. Do I then wish to destroy the idea of "holy orders?" By no means; I only wish to extend it. All I say is, that every man who is in business is, and ought to consider himself to be, in holy orders. The preacher that expounds the Bible is not on that account a whit holier than the journeyman who prints it. The bishop that writes a commentary is not on that account a whit more sacred than the compositors who arrange the letters and press

them on paper. All depends, not on the work you do, but on the spirit in which you do it. It is not the gift that sanctifies the altar, but the altar the gift. It is not the work that consecrates the workman, but the workman the work. Why—a chimney-sweep is in holy orders provided he sweep the chimneys clean.

“A servant with this clause
Makes drudgery divine;
Who sweeps a room, as for thy laws,
Makes that and the action fine.”

2. He further shows that work is not *incompatible* with the highest religious attainments. He worked diligently, no doubt, at His earthly calling, and yet continued in unbroken communion with God. Unfortunately, many of the primitive Christians believed business and religion to be incompatible; hence the division to the world on one hand, and to cloisters and monasteries on the other. Christianity and literature were looked upon as inimical; hence the distinction in the realm of letters into sacred and profane. The services of the sanctuary and of the shop were looked upon as widely separated; hence the distinction into clergy and laity. The clergy were looked upon as in holy orders; where then were the masses? In unholy orders? The idea! These unwarrantable and mischievous distinctions we all agree to deny in their old breadth; nevertheless, they still linger in the mind of Christendom. We have heard congregations sing with much ardour such hymns as this—

"Riper and riper yet
 Each hour let me become ;
 Less fit for scenes below,
 More fit for such a home."

"Less fit for scenes below!" But is it true that the more fit you become for heaven, the less fit you are for earth? I do not believe it. I believe the best man for the next world is also the best man for this. I believe in the compatibility of religion and business; I believe it possible to make the best of the two worlds. No; depend upon it, business is not antagonistic to spirituality of mind. You ask for the proof: here it is—Jesus Christ working at the trade of a carpenter among the half-heathenish population of Nazareth, and yet living in unbroken communion with His Father.

3. By following a trade, He further showed that the highest purpose of work is not fortune but *discipline*. Jesus Christ worked hard at Nazareth; but His hard work did not bring him a fortune. Yet He gained something by it—He gained discipline. Were the amassing of money the chief end of labour, then He must have missed it. But the fact that He did miss it proves to us that it is not the chief end, nor even a by-end—that it is only one of the accidents of work. Now I say nothing against making a fortune; at all events, it is better than unmaking it. What I decry is the tendency manifest in the present age to make material riches the chief end of labour, and to convert the world into a huge mint, and men and women into so many machines for making money. Humanity is reduced into a sum in arithmetic, and man's worth is put down in pounds, shillings, and

pence. In the language of certain savage tribes, souls are called stomachs ; in the language of English commerce in this nineteenth century of the Christian era, they are, forsooth, called hands. The highest point of ambition among the nude tribes of the woods is to get something to eat ; hence they have no more dignified name for man than a stomach : the highest point of ambition in a country like ours is money ; hence men are looked upon as so many hands wherewith to get it. The Scriptures speak of the "souls Abraham got him in Haran ;" then servants were called souls. But now, alas ! they are called "hands." And I protest against belittling our nature by calling it a hand. Not that I despise the hand ; perhaps in no other member of the body is so significantly marked the superiority of man over the irrational creatures ; and I do not complain that men are hard-worked,—they ought to be hard-worked in a world like ours ; but I do aver that the hand is not the whole nor the noblest part of man. Fortune is all very well if it meets you on the turnpike road ; but it is not worth your while to climb over hedges and wade through ditches to catch it. Fortune is all very well in its way, but let me tell you who are bedazzled with its glitter—it is not worth your while to be damned for it, it is not worth your while to fritter away your best manhood to obtain it.

If to make a fortune is not the chief end of business, what then is it ? It is to make men. An old nurse of James the First asked him to make her son a gentleman for her sake. "Indeed, nurse," was the reply, "that I cannot do. I can make him a duke or an earl ; but I cannot make him a gentleman." But what English

royalty could not do, God Almighty proposes to accomplish ; by means of work He resolves to develop us from lowest animalhood right up all the way to royallest manhood. "Cursed be the ground for thy sake." That is to say, the earth is struck barren, not so much because of your sin and as the result of your transgression ; but rather for your good, to promote your well-being. "Cursed is the ground for your sake." Hard work is a supreme blessing to humanity. By making work, not a choice, but a necessity, God instituted the best means to get humanity on. Not to get your circumstances on, and leave you in the same place. His principal aim is to get *you* on ; and in order to get *you* on, He may find it necessary to beat your *circumstances* back. In order to show you heaven, there is a "need-be" to throw you on your back on a bed of sickness. But never mind,—the vision is worth the sacrifice. Jacob in exile dreamt a brighter dream than he ever dreamt at home. John on the barren rocks of Patmos saw diviner sights than he ever beheld in Ephesus, surrounded by loving elders and devoted disciples. John Bunyan, in Bedford gaol, saw grander visions and dreamt stranger dreams than he ever did in the enjoyment of liberty. And the Almighty may find it necessary to shatter your fortune, and fling you on your back on the ground to show you the magnificent panorama of another world. "But my disappointments in life, my failures in business, almost crush me ; I am getting back in the world !" is the cry of anguish I hear wrung from some heart-sore and oppressed one. Are you, my brother ? I am very sorry to hear it. I suppose we cannot all get on in this world of ours, and my text

reminds us of another who worked very hard, who followed His trade diligently, but did not get on very well except towards Gethsemane, Calvary, and the grave. He can sympathise with you ; He stands by your side, ready to share your burden ; He stoops, He bends ; may you have the grace to roll it on His shoulders ! What is Christianity ? God bending beneath and bearing aloft the burden of the world. If work does not better your earthly condition, it will improve your heart ; if it does not add to your fortune, it will considerably augment your manhood ; if it will not bring you affluence in this life, it will help to qualify you for a more abundant entrance on the rich, profound life on yonder side the grave.

IV. JESUS CHRIST IN HIS RELIGIOUS OR TEMPLE LIFE.

I. The context shows us that He was in His *Father's house*, and that whilst there the blessed and glorious truth of His Sonship dawned upon Him. All rich natures, all deep and fertile natures, feel an attraction towards God's temple. There is so much mystery appealing powerfully to the worshipful faculty, so much solemn grandeur subduing the heart and carrying it captive, such sublimity and loftiness in the service of the temple, though outwardly it be but a barn, that it gives ample scope for the imagination. Hence all rich, poetical natures find their proper food and their appropriate atmosphere in the service of God's house. And the condition on which Jesus Christ attained a sense of His filial relation was attendance on the prescribed ordinances of religion ; in the temple the truth flashed through His soul

in all its dazzling splendour—"God is My Father, I am His Son." This idea now took possession of His soul; by degrees His soul took possession of the idea.

On the same condition can we realise our relation to God. The people who forget the assembling of themselves together, as the manner of some is, who never actively concern themselves about God's work, will never attain to a sense of their Divine sonship. This is the reward only of those who serve the Lord day and night in His temple, spending their time and strength in Sabbath schools and similar educational and benevolent institutions. By faith in Christ we receive the "adoption of sons;" but it is by work for Christ and prayerful dependence on Him that "we receive the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father."

2. He was in the Temple, *asking and answering questions*. He was but a child of twelve, and yet He declares He is engrossed in His Father's work. What work could He at that age be engaged in? The answer is plain—the work of learning. Some, I know, have described, and others have painted, this scene as "Christ Teaching in the Temple." But it is truer to nature to view it, not as Christ teaching, but as Christ learning, in the Temple. He was "in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors," as was the custom with Jewish students, "both hearing them and asking them questions." His mind thirsted for knowledge; in the eagerness of youth He propounded problems for the accomplished doctors to solve, problems which no doubt puzzled His youthful intellect, problems so weighty that "all that heard Him were astonished at His understand-

ing and answers." Jesus Christ at this tender age did not assume the functions of a teacher—He was too natural to overstep the limits of His age; He was now a learner, availing Himself of the facilities afforded Him by the Temple classes to grow in the knowledge of the Divine Will. He "increased in wisdom," just as our children do, and by the same means of prayer, study, and inquiry, subject, however, to the vast difference brought about by sin in our children and the total absence of sin in Him. That difference was doubtless immense in the facility of acquiring knowledge. We are apt to think that sin has only spoiled the heart; it has spoiled the intellect quite as much. We are all ready to admit that it has made havoc of our happiness; it has made quite as great a havoc of our knowledge. "Plato is only the ruins of an Adam, Aristotle only the rubbish of a perfect man." But as Christ was free from sin, His insight was quicker, clearer, deeper than ours. An intellect twelve years old free from sin will astonish intellects fifty years old tainted by the disease. The water-lily, growing in the midst of water, opens its leaves, expands its petals, at the first pattering of the shower, whilst other flowers in the same neighbourhood are quite insensible to the descent of the rain-drops. Why? Because reared in water, it has quicker sympathy with rain. And so with the Lily of our Humanity: His soul, planted, as it were, in the midst of the ocean of omniscience, rejoiced in knowledge with a quicker and more refined sympathy than has ever been witnessed before or since in the history of our race.

3. Observe, further, His total *absorption* in His Father's work. "Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" Literally, "in My Father's business." Not about it, but in it. He was so swallowed up in the religion of the Temple that probably for the space of three days He forgot all about His earthly parents and the return of the caravansery to His Galilæan home; a proper introduction to a life entirely devoted to the service of God and human kind. One day He enters the Temple and drives out the tradesmen, the traffickers, and the exchangers of money; "and His disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up." He did not say it, only the disciples remembered it as they witnessed His enthusiasm, His thorough absorption in the Divine work. He walked the marble corridors of the Temple like a flame from the Everlasting Burnings. "Then they remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up." I have often thought that, even if the crucifixion had never taken place, Jesus Christ would have died a young man, consumed in the fires of His own heart and brain. He did not live long, but He lived very fast—He lived life through. He lived more in thirty-three years than we could in a thousand years. Put a robin redbreast in a glass cage, filled with oxygen gas; and in a few minutes his little eyes will begin to glisten, his little heart will begin to throb, his little wings will begin to flutter, and his little throat will pour out cataracts of sweetest melody, and in fifteen minutes he will fall down dead; having expended in that short time a sufficient quantity of life to last him

under ordinary circumstances for five years. Similarly Jesus Christ lived very fast, His head towered high above the stars, He inhaled the pure atmosphere of eternity—He crowded all the “forces of the world to come,” all the “power of an endless life,” into the short space of thirty-three years. “Wist ye not that I must be in My Father’s business?” *Must, MUST, MUST.* O great word! O mysterious word! A word without moods and without tenses, a word without a conjugation, a word that will stand erect even if the heavens fall! *MUST.* Have we ever felt the power of this “must”? Has the sense of duty and obligation been awakened in us? Do we frequent the services of the Church, teach in the Sabbath School, visit the widows and the orphans, not simply because we like but because we must? Is our religion reducible to pleasure or to duty? And let us remember that it is time to awaken in our children at the age of twelve the awful sense of duty, to impress on their minds the inviolable sacredness of the words “ought” and “must.”

THE LORD JESUS AS A HIGH PRIEST.

BY THE REV. LEWIS EDWARDS, D.D., BALA.

"But Christ being come an High Priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."—HEB. ix. 11, 12.

THE nature and purpose of the priestly office have been clearly set forth in the fifth chapter of this epistle and the first verse: "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins." Our great things are the things between us and God, "the things pertaining to God." These are so great, and have become so bad, that we ourselves can never reduce them to order. Whatever the complications between us and one another, it is not necessary to have a priest to mediate between us; but our case, as between us and God, is such that we must have One to appear for us, One holy, undefiled, and separate from sinners; and even He cannot go to God for us without blood; and therefore an essential part of a priest's duties is to sacrifice. A deep consciousness of this truth is to be seen in the history of the pagan nations of antiquity,

even the most civilised; which of necessity proves one of two things—either that the custom of offering sacrifices arises naturally from the consciousness of guilt in the human mind, and that thus the light which the Creator kindled in the consciences of men bears witness to the correspondence between Divine Revelation and the requirements of human nature; or that the nations had received imperfect information through tradition of the revelation made to special persons before the time of Moses, and afterwards with greater minuteness through Moses to the Hebrew people. Whichever view we take, we must go back to God to discover the origin of the custom of sacrificing as practised among the heathen. It is, moreover, a remarkable fact in the annals of the world that this custom was annulled, not only in Judæa, but in every other country, when Christ sacrificed Himself, and that it gradually decayed and vanished from the face of the earth.

But the custom of sacrificing did not so completely disappear in so short a time from among any nation as from among that in which it had struck its roots deepest, and which had received all the regulations pertaining thereto directly from God. The Jews are to-day in this condition, that they believe as firmly as ever in the necessity of sacrificing, and yet have not sacrificed for eighteen hundred years. Is there not mystery here? The reason they assign is that the Temple in Jerusalem has been destroyed; but this reason rests on a stronger reason, which is to be found in John's explanation of the words of the Lord Jesus—"But He spake of the temple of His body." When Jesus said, "Destroy this temple, and in three

days I will raise it up," He pointed no doubt to the material structure out of which He had just cast the exchangers of money, for He would not have led them to understand this had He not in reality meant this. This idea is true; but it is based on another idea, as the act is based on another act. A suggestion is here contained that they would demolish the Temple with their own hands; but if they saw the whole meaning they would have understood that it was by destroying the temple of His body they would accomplish that demolition. By destroying the temple of Christ's body, the Jews put an end to the whole service of their own temple; but by rising from the dead, Christ established a new economy, of which the temple of His body is the fixed centre for ever.

God never destroys for the sake of destroying, nor pulls down the old to leave a void in its place. The Divine method is to overcome evil by uplifting that which is good, and to remove the good, after it has served its purpose, by introducing that which is more excellent. The fact that the old sacrifices have ceased is in itself a sufficient proof that some greater sacrifice has taken place. The feeble light of the Old Dispensation would not have so completely disappeared had not the Dayspring from on high visited the world. The first vanished from sight, not by being extinguished, but by being swallowed up in stronger light. Thus Jesus Christ Himself speaks; "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." He needs not pull any one down in order to raise Himself up: rather such greatness

lodges in His sacrifice that it has surrounded with immortal lustre the types which foreshadowed it. But before the Old Dispensation could be thus clothed with immortality, it was necessary that it should first die. The system of symbols and types was necessary and valuable in the infancy of human nature, because it was not in a few ages that the world became prepared to receive the religion of the New Testament. Numerous proofs are not wanting to show that a nation requires to be trained for ages to receive even civil liberty; much more necessary was it for the world to undergo a long training to prepare it to receive the liberty of the Gospel. But though figures and symbols are useful as a means of education to man whilst he is a child, the thoughtful mind feels in looking at them that they are not the "good things to come." The tempests of life are coming, stern events are approaching, when the "figures" must give way to objects more real. Accordingly, some of the believing Jews doubtless felt, as they contemplated the customs prescribed by the law of Moses, that these were not the "good things to come;" that the God they worshipped was truly holy, that sin was a real evil, and that consequently the sacrifice must be a sacrifice in deed and in truth. This is what the Apostle teaches in these words concerning the Lord Jesus Christ: that He was come an High Priest of good things to come; and that therefore He had gone through the true tabernacle to the true holy place; that there was true worth in His blood, true perfection in His work, and that He obtained for us true liberty; and that consequently He far excelled the Jewish High Priest in the most remark-

able event belonging to his office, namely, his entering into the Most Holy Place on the great Day of Atonement.

I. Jesus Christ as a High Priest much excels in the
GREATNESS AND PERFECTNESS OF THE TABERNACLE.

Jesus Christ entered "by a greater and more perfect tabernacle." By the tabernacle here we are to understand, say some, the expanse above, the stellar firmament, through which Christ entered into the Holy Place. But the ablest commentators, and among them Chrysostom, Augustine, Calvin, and Bengel, understand by it the body of Jesus Christ. And the author of this Epistle furnishes a strong ground for that interpretation in chap. x. 20, where he says, "By a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh." A hint to the same purport is to be found in the text, for it is averred of this tabernacle that "it is not of this building," that is, not of this creation. The humanity of the Lord Jesus is the beginning of a new creation. But it is not the visible body in itself that is intended by the tabernacle, as it is not the visible blood in itself that is meant by the "blood;" but human nature in the person of the Son of God, in which the Word has "tabernacled" among us, and by which He is the "beginning of the creation of God."

This is taught as an essential truth in the Bible, that in the body of Christ God dwells: "for in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9). "And the Word," says John, "was made flesh." Not only He

took flesh into union with Himself, but "the Word became flesh." Deity and Humanity are in Him one person; and though the Deity was not converted into Humanity, yet the Divinity of the person imparts divine dignity and worth to what He did through His human nature. It was necessary for the Son to dwell thus personally in human nature, that the Father might have a fit tabernacle wherein to dwell graciously. Human nature in itself is greater than all the stellar heavens; but human nature in the person of the Eternal Word is a tabernacle so capacious and perfect that the Creator Himself can rest here for ever, and reveal therein His essential nature to His creatures. Infinite power and wisdom are to be seen in the creation. But though God is almighty, yet He is not power; though He is omniscient, yet He is not knowledge. God's nature is something different from infinite power or infinite knowledge. The Devil is mighty and intelligent, but he bears not the slightest similitude to God. What, then, is God in His nature? There are two sentences in John's first Epistle which furnish a full answer to this query. In 1 John i. 5 it is said, "God is light;" and in chap. iv. 16, "God is love." This is what God is. But the next question is—Where is He to be found? Where can we see Him, as He is holiness and love, infinite and inseparable? When we turn our eyes up to heaven, we behold the "work of His fingers," but He Himself is out of sight. We see His possessions, which show that their owner is incalculably rich; but we should like to ascertain where the owner dwells, that we may know what sort of one He is Himself. The answer to this is, that we must seek

Him, not in the sun nor in the stars, but in the man Christ Jesus. Here, and here alone, the whole nature of God comes to light. Here He is just and a Saviour, here He is infinite holiness and infinite love.

This truth was portrayed to Moses, as we find recorded in Exodus xxxiv. 5, 6, 7. God had said to him before, in Exodus vi. 2, 3, "I am Jehovah; and I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by *the name of* God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah was I not known to them." Observe the difference: it is not said "*by my name of* God Almighty;" as may be seen by the italics, the word "name" is not at all joined in the Hebrew to God Almighty; but it is said "by my name Jehovah." Whatever is the signification of this word, it is His name,—it sets forth what He is. After this, in Ex. xxxiii. 18, Moses beseeches to see His glory; and the Lord promises to proclaim His name, and to put him in the cleft of the rock, whilst His glory passes by. In this proclamation we have made known to us the meaning of the name Jehovah, and of what God is in His nature. "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, Jehovah, Jehovah God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and upon the children's children, unto the third and to the fourth generation." This is the Lord's glory; and it is possible for us to have in the man Christ Jesus a fuller view of this glory than Moses ever enjoyed.

Christ went *through* this tabernacle. The Jewish

high priest went once every year through the tabernacle to within the veil; but he was going and returning within the bounds of the temporal world; for his priesthood only reached to things external. But the true High Priest must go through the tabernacle to another world. He had been here, "tempted in all things even as we are, yet without sin." He had been living amongst us, as one of ourselves, yet holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners. And more than this were not necessary, had He not been standing in the room of sinners. But inasmuch as we are guilty, and that He was acting for us, and that we must have our liberty or redemption from another world, our High Priest went through the tabernacle of His humanity into the spiritual world; He went "through the veil, that is to say, His flesh," to the great invisible world; and He came back the third day, with the gracious proclamation upon His lips—"Peace unto you."

II. Jesus Christ as a High Priest much excels in the GREATNESS OF THE HOLY PLACE.

There was no need for a special word in this place to denote the greatness of the Holy Place, as it follows naturally from the preceding words. "Christ, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, entered in once into the Holy Place;" and if the tabernacle were "greater and more perfect," it follows of necessity that the Holy Place was so likewise. The same thought belongs to both. Christ entered through the tabernacle of His untainted humanity to a corresponding Holy Place; He went into the Holy Place of the eternal world; He

entered into the Holy of Holies of the universe. But God never does anything hurriedly; so Christ, after receiving the keys of the invisible world, took forty days to appear to His disciples at different times, in order to assure their minds that all power is given unto Him in heaven and on earth, and that a clear way, which no one may block, is opened unto them from earth to heaven. Then He ascended, in quiet unruffled glory, to take His proper place as the minister of the sanctuary, and sat down on the right hand of Majesty on high. He entered into the abode of the Divine Presence, where seraphs hide their faces with their wings; He went higher than they all, to some unutterable glory; He went on to the throne, and He went there in our nature. He sat in our nature on the right hand of the Throne of Majesty. There is not a higher place in all heaven than where Jesus Christ is to-day in our nature. He is as high as God Himself could raise Him. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name." This is the "working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

The apostle deemed of vast importance the consideration that we have a priest in heaven. He returns to it again and again. "Now, of the things which we have spoken this is the sum," rather the head, the crown. What then is the crown? "We have such a High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the Throne of the

Majesty in the heavens." Why is there such importance in the fact that we have a priest in heaven? Because in heaven our matter, our cause,* is to be discussed. Every one of us has his cause, and that cause is in heaven. Not in the metropolis; in heaven our cause is to be tried. Have we ever thought of it seriously? The great cause, the cause between us and God! We have a cause that reaches all the way from the earth to the throne of God! It is a great, it is a fearful thing to be a man; man has a cause in heaven. The irrational creatures around us, they have no cause to be tried in heaven; they shall come and go without any account entered in God's book against them. But we are men! We shall not move the lip to say a word, but forthwith that word is down in the books of heaven. Heaven takes notice of us. How precious then the thought, we have a High Priest concerning Himself in heaven about our cause; one great enough to plead our cause before God's throne in the third heaven! Let us commit our cause to Him! Though it be a bad cause, He can rectify the wrong, and raise us to the favour of the throne. He is a High Priest, gone through the tabernacle into the Holiest of All.

Now, the religion of Christ has to do with the things of heaven. The objects of the Jewish religion were on the earth. But this is the main stumblingblock, and at the same time the principal excellence of the Gospel—that its things are in heaven. "Ye are not come unto the mountain that might be touched." The things of religion now are not objects of sensation, but objects of faith. And this is the reason why the apostle treats so

* Welsh *achos*, matter, cause, case.

much about faith towards the end of this epistle. "But ye are come to Mount Sion, and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." We also have a city, we also have a Sion and a Jerusalem; but not on the earth. "Ye are come to an innumerable company of angels." Not to the figures of cherubs are ye come; no, but ye are come to the angels themselves through faith. To the eye of faith they are always around us. We are now in the same church as the angels in heaven. "Ye are come to the general assembly and the church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven." Who came? *Every one* that has believed in Christ. To where have they come? To the same church, to the same community as the saints in heaven. Our brethren who have slept in death have not changed their church. Jesus Christ has made one church from here to the farthestmost limits of heaven. "Ye are come to God, the Judge of all;" not to a symbol of Him, but to God Himself. "And to Jesus, the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling." This is the essence, this the centre of heaven, Jesus and the blood; not a dead sacrifice only, but He who offered Himself on the earth alive now in heaven, and there as a High Priest eternally presenting His own blood on behalf of transgressors. And this is the essence of true religion; not forms, not feelings, not ordinances; but the soul entering into communion with things in heaven.

III. Christ as a High Priest excels in the PRECIOUSNESS OF THE BLOOD.

He entered into the Holy Place, not by the blood of

goats and calves, but by His own blood. Jesus Christ did not enter heaven without blood. Consider this truth: the Son of God was in such a position in His relation to sinners that even *He* should not enter heaven without blood. Heaven was shut against the Son of God as mediator; and it was not possible it should be opened without blood. Sinner, how wilt thou go there without blood? Thou self-righteous Pharisee, how canst thou dream of entering God's heaven in virtue of thine own good works, when there was no way of entrance to the High Priest Himself without blood?

But the blood of "goats and calves" would not serve the purpose wherewith to enter heaven. The blood of those creatures sufficed for the tabernacle on the earth; for only the symbol of God was there, and therefore the symbol of an atonement sufficed. But Jesus went to the Godhead Himself to arrange our matter; He went to the essential justice of the infinite Majesty with our case, and there the symbol of an atonement would not answer but a perfect Atonement—an Atonement with infinite merit in it—an Atonement through blood, and that blood the blood of God's Son. This is blood with true worth in it, and that worth sufficient to fulfil all the demands of the Divine Nature; and therefore it opened heaven, not only to the Son, but to all that believe on Him. What is its worth? We cannot answer but by repeating the Apostle's words—*His own blood*, HIS OWN BLOOD!

The worth of the blood was owing to the worth of the life, and the worth of the life to the greatness of the Person. When a man is martyred, the soul does not die; nevertheless, the soul imparts worth to the life of the

body, and confers immeasurably more importance on the death of a man than the death of a beast. But notwithstanding the greatness of the difference between man and an animal, it is only a difference of degrees. Man is but a creature as well as the animal. But the difference between man and God is as great as that between a creature and the Creator. And yet, in the person of Jesus Christ, the Creator has come into closer union with humanity than that between our souls and our bodies. Though, perhaps, it be not proper to say that God died, yet the one who died was God. The infinite Person of the Son was in the obedience; the infinite Person was in the sufferings; the infinite Person was in the death: imparting boundless worth and merit to all, so as to be a "propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world."

Because the Person is so great, the preciousness of the blood has filled all heaven, and has converted the throne of Majesty into a mercy-seat. The voice of the martyrs' blood was reaching from earth to heaven, crying for vengeance; but this blood is in heaven crying for forgiveness. This is the blood of sprinkling, "which speaketh better things than that of Abel." If the blood of Abel was crying for vengeance on Cain, it might be expected that the atrocious act of shedding the blood of the only begotten Son would oblige the great God to damn the whole world. But, instead of that, the language of the blood is, "O Father, forgive them." Instead of turning the whole world to hell, it has opened heaven, and secured a clear way from the deepest misery to the highest glory.

This is blood which, according to the Bible phraseology, has purified heaven itself. "And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; it was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." Christ's blood purified heaven—purified God's throne—purified the law itself. Had heaven ever been unclean? No, never; not for half a minute. Sin was once committed in heaven; but heaven was not defiled. The devils and their sin were driven out, without leaving a stain behind. Why, then, was it necessary to purify heaven, to purify the heavenly things? Though heaven was perfectly clean, yet the entrance therein of one sinner would foul it from end to end without the Surety's blood. Oh, there is great evil in sin; yes, there is unfathomable evil in it. On account of our sins, we are creatures that would pollute heaven itself were we admitted there—we would stain the great white throne were we brought near it—were it not for the blood of the Surety. But this blood, the "precious blood of Christ," preserves heaven pure, and at the same time saves all those who believe in His name.

IV. Jesus Christ excels as High Priest in the PERFECTNESS OF HIS WORK.

The Jewish high priest was obliged to go to the holy place every year, because there was no effectual reconciliation; only the surface was a little washed, only temporal forgiveness was administered. But the sacrifice of Christ effected a thorough reconciliation—there is no

need for a second attempt. "He entered once into the Holy Place."

Everything great is one: one soul—one Bible—one salvation—one judgment to come—"one God"—"one mediator also"—one atonement. To suffer and die once on Calvary has sufficed for ever. "There is one God," says the Apostle, and only one. This is easily seen. There can be but one Infinite. As one God fills everywhere, there is no place for another. Well, as one God fills infinity, so Christ's one death has filled the mind of the Godhead. It is therefore idle to add to it; God cannot accept an additional sacrifice. Though the sun be great in comparison with the earth, yet there is room enough in space for innumerable more suns; but there is no room for another atonement in the whole universe. A deed was committed one afternoon on our earth, a deed greater than all the creation, a deed so great that it is impossible ever to add to it. He "entered once into the Holy Place."

In connection with this subject were spoken the words contained in the concluding verses of this chapter: "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment." Death may be repeated in representation; but when death truly comes, no second attempt is possible; but after this the judgment. Similarly the Jewish high priest was only sacrificing in representation, and therefore "entered into the holy place every year with blood of others." The old verdict was still in force, "Dying, thou shalt die." But One appeared at last to make null the verdict, "and to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." He underwent the sentence, that

He might finish dying, and thus bring life and immortality to light. But neither He, any more than others, could have a second opportunity. His death was the one last attempt to settle the destiny of the world for ever. "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." The great Surety Himself, in view of the struggle, feared, and prayed, "If it be possible, let this cup pass from Me." And if He failed, there was not a second to essay it. The pillars of heaven would be loosened, and death would reign an invincible king over the whole creation. But inasmuch as He had life in Himself, He swallowed up death in victory; and now He that has been under the verdict is He that will come as Judge; and "unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

V. Jesus Christ excels as High Priest in the
NATURE AND EFFICACY OF THE REDEMPTION.

He obtained eternal redemption or deliverance for us. This follows necessarily from the other part of the verse. As He went to the Holy Place in heaven, it must be that the redemption is eternal. There is not a higher court ever to reverse the verdict. The acquittal is from the Throne of God Himself. No wonder that the Apostle felt, in view of this, such a holy confidence, that he asks, in the eighth chapter of the Romans, "Who will lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" Where is the accuser of the brethren? Let him bring forward all his indictments. Let the world come forward with all its subtilty, and withhold not a single accusation. We have a sufficient answer for all, "It is God that justifieth."

If God justifieth, where is one great enough to revise the sentence? And where is one strong enough to undo it? "Who is he that condemneth?"

Besides, seeing that Christ entered through His own blood as a High Priest for us, it follows of necessity that the acquittal is eternal. "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" As High Priest He stood for, and in the place of, the nation; and if He was justified in the spirit, then it secures the acquittal of the whole creation. We were dying in His death, rising in His resurrection, ascending in His ascension; and the Bible teaches that this union between Christ and His people is so intimate that the saints that are on earth sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. To ask, How much lies between the man, who puts his trust in the sacrifice of Christ, and falling to hell? is the same as to ask, How much is between Christ and falling from heaven? His eternal reception into heaven is our eternal redemption. Through this glorious union our life is hid with Christ in God. Christ Himself is our life. He is our Head; and His life and ours is one eternal life.

Eternity! The mind becomes lost in thinking of it. Man's mind is able to wander in imagination to the end of the world, and it is not weakened by the effort. But when it ventures in its own strength beyond the horizon of time, to a world where neither sun nor moon shines, where there is not an earth to stand upon, nor air to breathe in, to a world where the laws of the visible

creation extend not, it finds itself in a perfect vacuum, without measurement, and without the feeblest ray piercing thereinto; and notwithstanding every endeavour to move on, it feels itself sinking inevitably to depths of darkness, where it can never cease to be, nor cease to sink deeper and deeper into woe, without a hope of improvement in his estate for ever. But when he beholds through faith the "eternal redemption obtained for us," he sees worlds of wonder around him in the boundless space; he sees eternity filled with the truths of that salvation which will never end; and those truths immutable realities in indissoluble connection with the Person of the Lord Jesus, and receiving light and life imperishable from Him, who is "the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, who is, who was, and who is to come, the Almighty."

An important period in a man's life is that, when he begins to realise the meaning and contents of the word "eternity." It would be the commencement of his conversion to the most thoughtless man if he were to begin to ponder over this word, and to think solemnly that he himself is a creature who is to live for ever. Our reason teaches us that we must go from here soon; and our conscience tells us that the prison is our desert the other side of death. The language of the Bible concerning that place is—"Thou shalt not come hence till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing." "Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." "Eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." "The smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever, and they have no rest day nor night." This is God's own descrip-

tion of the place where we have deserved to be. But this is not all the Bible has to say concerning the sinner. The sum and substance of the Bible are made up of the glad tidings of redemption for captives. There is in it a full proclamation of eternal release through the blood of the cross to whosoever believes. Eternal release! O precious word to those who have deserved eternal imprisonment; a word great enough to fill the soul and quell the guilty conscience: a word great enough to enable the timid mind to look at the holy law without terror, and to launch into the endless world without affright. "He entered into the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." May we, every one for himself, now before it gets too late, lay hold of eternal life.

*THE ETERNAL UNION IN THE PERSON AND
WORK OF THE REDEEMER.*

BY THE REV. LEWIS EDWARDS, D.D., BALA.

"Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things."—EPH. iv. 9, 10.

It appears that the object the Apostle had in view in speaking these words was to prove that the quotation from the Psalm, which he cites in the preceding verse, was spoken concerning the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ. The subject he has in hand in this chapter is union—the union of the saints with one another. He adduces a multitude of reasons to show that there ought to be union; but in the 7th verse, he seems to lead their thoughts to the great source from which this union springs: "But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Though he brings forward the strongest reasons to prove the necessity of this union, even God Himself, "one God and Father of all"—all will be ineffectual to unite us, if without real union between us and the Lord Jesus. "Unto every one of us is given grace." Notwithstanding the variety of gifts, we all receive from the same

fountain—"according to the measure of the gift of Christ." Then the Apostle, according to a frequent habit of his, cites a verse from the Old Testament: "Wherefore he saith, When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." These are words from Psalm lxviii.; or at least they convey the substance thereof. But it might be objected that it was about God the Psalmist is speaking. It is evident that he is speaking about some one greater than man—about Jehovah—who had ascended up on high. There is no controversy about that—He who ascended was greater than man, greater than an angel: and Paul admits so much. What reason, then, had he for applying the words to the "man Christ Jesus?" In the text He shows the propriety of the application: "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" If the Bible speaks of God ascending, it follows that He must have descended first: the argument of necessity implies that. God was so great, so lofty, that He could not ascend without descending first. If it were averred of an angel, "he ascended," he could do so without first descending. But there was no room for God as God to go higher; therefore if the Bible affirms of Him, "He ascended," it must be that it speaks of Him in the Person of Him "who descended into the lower parts of the earth." "He who descended is the same also who ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things."

I shall now try to dwell on the chief subject of these verses. It is obvious the subject the Apostle has in hand here is—the union from everlasting to everlasting in the person of the Son of God. Before He descended—after

He descended—after He ascended up far above all heavens, He is one and the same in all. In order to explain the matter, we shall divide it with greater minuteness:—

I. There was union between the GREATNESS OF THE PERSON AND THE GREATNESS OF THE OBEDIENCE.

II. There was union between the GREATNESS OF THE OBEDIENCE AND THE MERITS OF THE SUFFERINGS.

III. There was union between the MERITS OF THE SUFFERINGS AND THE HEIGHT OF THE EXALTATION OR ASCENSION.

IV. There is union again between the HEIGHT OF THE EXALTATION AND HIS FILLING ALL THINGS IN THE CHURCH TO THE END OF TIME.

I. THERE WAS UNION BETWEEN THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST'S PERSON AND THE GREATNESS OF HIS OBEDIENCE.

He was so great that He could not be greater. There was no possibility of His going higher. He was in the form of God, the express image of His Person; He it was that descended. That is what Jesus Christ did in coming to the world—"He descended." He not only assumed human nature, body and soul, into union with His Divine Person; but more than that—"He descended." We are wont to say that He took human nature into union with Himself; and there is no reason to blame the expression—we must have divers ways to reveal thought. But the Bible says a great deal more—He Himself descended. The Divine Person came down—the Divine Person was in the manger—He it was that was without a place to lay His head—He Himself, the whole of

Him, and not a part of Him. He, the whole of Him, was made under the law—He was made of a woman—the WORD was made flesh. He took flesh: more—He *was made* flesh. This is He that descended; this the Person that rendered obedience to the law. One that was above all law was made under the law. True, He was not above justice or righteousness: a few have sometimes got confused here. How could anyone, they ask, be above law? The Son of God was not above justice or righteousness, yet He was above law. Law supposes a rule given by a greater to a lesser, by a higher to a lower. But here is One than whom there was no greater, no higher, to prescribe a law to Him. The law was high, it is true; it must have been high before One so great could have come under it. But however high it was, here is One higher than it. But though He was above the law, yet He came under the law—He Himself, remember, the whole of Him. Not He went under it a man, and as man; but the infinite Person, both God and man, this it was that rendered obedience in our stead!

II. THERE WAS UNION BETWEEN THE GREATNESS OF THE OBEDIENCE AND THE MERITS OF THE SUFFERINGS.

Here again there must be no dividing. The sufferings without the obedience would not have been an atonement; and the sufferings and the obedience would not have given satisfaction without the greatness of the Person. All together, all through one another, in some way that we cannot comprehend: "He is the Propitiation," Though the Person was so great, yet He could

not save a sinner without obeying. And though He rendered perfect obedience in life, yet He could not be a Saviour without suffering—without shedding His blood. In hell there is suffering, but no obedience; in heaven there is obedience, but no suffering; but here, in one place, we behold both obedience and suffering. And the obedience *unto* suffering was the crown of the obedience. “He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” And, let us remember, He it was that was obedient—the Person it was that suffered. Some One greater than man died on Calvary. Even a pagan could perceive so much; and it is extraordinarily strange if we have not yet perceived it. Some One greater than a finite creature was dying on the tree. He Himself—not a part of Him, the eternal Son of God, one co-equal with the Father, He it was that suffered. “He gave HIMSELF for us.”

In His descent, He went “to the lower parts of the earth.” We know not where that is—somewhere that no one has seen except Himself. Remember who He was; one that could not be higher going so low that He could not go lower! He descended to the *lowest* * parts of the earth. Some of the old Fathers preferred reading—“He descended to parts lower than the earth.” So they believed; and perhaps the next verse contains a hint that thus it was, for so the contrast between the two sentences is complete: *above* all *heavens*, and *lower* than the *earth*. Unutterable distance here! In His sufferings He went lower than the earth. Where did He go to? The old people answered, To hell. And

* The Welsh version,

that is what the Bible says on the subject—"Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." We do not say He went to hell as a place; but He did go to hell as a state. There is in hell no suffering from God but the Son of God underwent. Keep in mind all the while who He was: one higher than the heavens going lower than the earth!

III. THERE IS UNION BETWEEN THE MERITS OF THE SUFFERINGS AND THE HEIGHT OF THE EXALTATION (ascension). "He who descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens."

There is here an indissoluble union; one could not be without the other. He could not ascend without descending first, and descending lower than the earth. The eternal Son of God had entered into some relation with us. He went under our debt. For which reason God Himself—His Father, who loved Him infinitely above our comprehension—could not open heaven even to Him till He had first died. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made rich." All the riches of the Godhead as Creator would not pay our debt. The great God possessed not wealth enough to discharge a sinner's liabilities. What was to be done? He must give HIMSELF as our ransom. He laid down His life. Was it not human life that He offered? No; His own infinite Person He gave to cancel our debt. And without that, it was not possible for Him to ascend up to heaven. But by to-day the poverty of Calvary has become un-

searchable riches ; the depth of the passion has turned out to be unutterable glory. It cost Him as much as He had to discharge our obligations ; the Son of God had none to spare—no surplus ; He had to give all, yea, He had to give Himself ! Wherefore the Father is now determined to exalt Him ; He is on the right hand of Majesty on high.

And He is the same in heaven that He was here on the earth. He is the same now as when receiving publicans and sinners. The emotions of His heart are the same ; He can sympathise "with our infirmities," inasmuch as "He was tempted in all points like as we are." Though "up far above all heavens," He feels as He felt here on the earth when "without a place to lay His head." He went in all He is above all heavens. As He came all down, so He went all up. The Divine Person descended, and human nature is ascended. The sinner's nature is now in the Person of the Son of God in heaven. Every angel bows to Him ; the thrones and principalities and dominions are made subject to Him. Has He forgotten His brethren ? No ; He is the same on the right hand. After becoming the highest in the court, He has not forgotten Joseph ; His heart beats in unison with thine, who art among the least of His brethren. In the infinitude of His exaltation, His love has not cooled one degree.

IV. THERE IS UNION AGAIN BETWEEN THE HEIGHT OF HIS EXALTATION AND HIS WORK IN FILLING ALL THINGS TO THE END OF TIME : "that He might fill all things."

The Bible teaches us that He could not fill the Church

without ascending up far above all heavens. "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go, I will send Him unto you." "I will not leave you orphans; I will come again unto you." "Behold, I am with you alway." When He was about leaving His disciples, He said these things unto them. By going from them, He was able to come to them, and remain with them. If He remained on the earth, He could not be with His people always, everywhere, to the end of the world. It is true that He had power whilst on earth to forgive sin; nevertheless that was not His chief work before His ascension to glory, but to make an atonement for sin in order to its forgiveness. He was here in the form of a servant, though His greatness occasionally manifested itself in the healing of the sick, and that as a sign of something greater, namely, His power to forgive sins. But now God has exalted Him with His right hand to be a prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel and the forgiveness of sins. Whilst here in poverty and bondage, working out our salvation, He was out of his poverty enriching those who came into contact with Him; but now He is rich in mercy, and from the throne He administers forgiveness. His great work on earth was to fill the demands of heaven; and His great work in heaven is to fill the demands of earth. From the earth He filled heaven with obedience; and from heaven He fills the earth with forgiveness. From the earth He filled heaven with satisfaction; and from heaven He fills the earth with peace. From the earth He filled heaven with atonement; and from heaven He fills the earth with

holiness. He filled heaven in order to fill the earth ; and again He fills the earth with a view to fill heaven ; and thus all things are of God and to God. In His Father's house are many mansions, which must be filled ; and He is gone to prepare them for His people. And when the earth is filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, heaven will be filled with men saved, a large multitude which no man can number, all giving the glory to the Trinity in Unity. "And there shall be no more curse : but the throne of God and the Lamb shall be in it ; and His servants shall serve Him." "Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father ; when He shall have put down all rule and all authority and power ; for He must reign, till He hath put all enemies under His feet."

THE GOSPEL A DOGMA AND A POWER.

BY THE REV. J. MORRIS, D.D., BRECON.

"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."—ROM. i. 16.

THIS is high testimony to the Divine origin and power of the Gospel of Christ. It is the testimony of a man of large intellectual powers and ample attainments, and consequently capable of estimating the force and weight of any evidence that was within his reach. It is the testimony of one of the first propagators of Christianity, of one who did more to publish and spread the Gospel through the world than all the other Apostles taken together; and although not one of the original band who were associated with the Lord Jesus during His public ministry, and were eye-witnesses of His wonderful history, yet he was acquainted with them, and had all the advantage of what they had heard, and seen, and looked upon and handled of the Word of Life. It is furthermore the testimony of one who was originally a Jew, a bigoted and fanatical Jew, "one who made havoc of the Church" and did all he could to strangle Christianity in its very cradle, until that memorable journey to Damascus when he was arrested in his mad career by the insulted majesty of Jesus whom he persecuted.

Where is now the fury of the blasphemer, the persecutor, and the injurious man? It is all gone in a moment, vanquished by the voice and vision of the Son of God, at whose feet he trembled and cried, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" What an extraordinary change of front! What a marvellous change of heart! He who thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth, now counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus the Lord. He who had hitherto regarded the Gospel as an impious fraud, and blasphemy against the God of his fathers, is now ready to preach the faith which once he destroyed, and to declare before the whole world, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ." Let us now consider

I. The IMPORT of the avowal thus made by the great Convert.

1. He avows that he is not ashamed of *the Gospel of Christ*. What is the gospel of Christ? The general meaning is contained in the words of the angel of the Lord to the shepherds of Bethlehem—"Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." A more definite account of it may be found within very brief compass in sundry golden passages of the New Testament, stamped on the memory of every Christian. Take for example the following: "When the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." "God

so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." "This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." "Be it known unto you, men and brethren, that through this Man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him all that believe are justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses." "Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins." "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you *the Gospel* which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, *how that Christ died for our sins* according to the Scriptures."

When the great Apostle says "I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ," he must mean "I am not ashamed of the doctrines of Christianity." Many in our day hold a different view from that of Saint Paul. They say that Christianity is independent of doctrine. Their incessant cry is, *No dogma, no doctrine, no theology.* The burden of their song is the old ditty:

"For modes of faith let graceless bigots fight,
His can't be wrong whose life is in the right."

We all believe in the right life; but some of us believe

also that there can be no right life in the true sense, apart from the right belief, that is, faith in the doctrines of the gospel of Christ. "Speak they of morals, O Thou bleeding Lamb! the great morality is love to Thee."

I wish some of our modern preachers would try their hand in converting the heathen. I should like to hear them preach to the Mahometan, the Hindoo, or the Buddhist. As they renounce all doctrine, what could they say to the people? I fancy they would find themselves in the same predicament as the Moravian Missionaries, who began their Mission to the Greenlanders with preaching the Decalogue. "You must not kill," said the missionary. "Fool," said the people, "we know that as well as you." "You must not commit adultery," said the missionary. "Fool," said the hearers, "do you think that we don't know that?" "You must not steal," said the preacher, and again received the same contemptuous reply. He who renounces doctrine, renounces Christianity. He may be a Pantheist or an Agnostic, but he cannot be a Christian.

The Apostle was not ashamed to preach the great articles of the Christian Faith—the incarnation of the Son of God, the redemption of the Cross, perfect restoration to God's favour through faith in Christ alone, the birth to a new life by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. He believed them with all his heart, and he was not ashamed to confess his faith before a gainsaying world.

2. Having considered the object with reference to which the avowal was made, let us now consider the *avowal* itself.

Some may think that it required no great heroism in

the Apostle to make known his Christianity to the world. This is a great mistake. For Christianity was then a new religion, and all the world was in arms against it. The Jew against it, the Greek against it, the Roman against it.

To the Jew it was a stumbling-block, for he expected a Messiah that should give him earthly felicity—a Messiah that should lead him on to victory and make him master of the world, a Messiah that should abide on the earth for ever and reign in undying splendour. "We have heard," said the Jews, "that Christ abideth for ever, how sayest thou then that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" He cannot be the Messiah which we are looking for. They scorned the idea of a suffering Messiah. It was an offence and a scandal to them: But Paul was not ashamed nor afraid to preach Christ and Him crucified. "None of these things moved him, neither counted he his life dear unto him, so that he might finish his course with joy and the ministry which he received of the Lord Jesus."

What was a stumbling-block to the Jews, was foolishness to the Greeks. It was sheer nonsense to them to worship a man who was crucified, to trust in a Saviour who could not—or at least did not—save Himself. But in the face of all this, Paul could lift up an unblushing front. He was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. He was ready to plant the standard of the Cross in the stronghold of heathenism. He was ready to preach the Gospel at Rome, the mistress of the world, the great centre where the great, the wise, and the learned of the world were gathered together. He knew what to expect from such people,—he knew the contempt, the scorn, the

ridicule, they would pour upon his poor uncovered head; but he did not shrink from the fiery ordeal,—he was eager for the fray, he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.

We live in happier times; “the lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places, and we have a goodly heritage.” A great change has come over the world since the apostolic age. Christianity is now in some sense the religion of the civilised world. The Cross is no longer a scandal and a reproach, but an honour and an ornament; it is woven into the standards of nations, and is the fairest ornament in the diadems of kings. But we must not forget that much of the prestige which now belongs to Christianity is outward, political, and worldly; and therefore the offence of the Cross has not altogether ceased. Persecution in its grosser form has passed away, but there is a sense, in which “he who lives godly in Christ Jesus must still suffer persecution.” If we treat the Gospel as a reality---if we act as if we believed it---if the life which we live in the flesh be by the faith of the Son of God, many will call us fools, fanatics, and hypocrites. What insults and mockeries and annoyances has many a Christian to endure in factories and workshops and places of business? What odious and insulting caricatures are continually poured forth from the press against sincere and earnest Christians, those who are the light and leaven and salt of the earth? There are some who profess to be followers of Christ that join in the unhallowed work. They pour contempt and scorn upon all who reject their novelties, and adhere to the faith once delivered to the saints. They brand them as shams, and

imbeciles, and ignoramuses; and claim for themselves exclusively all the wisdom and all the learning and all the piety in the world. It would seem that darkness was on the face of the earth until they were born, and ever since the light has been shining more and more to the perfect day. It requires no little firmness to meet the scorn of rationalistic religionists. "But be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled, but sanctify the Lord God in your heart, and be always ready to give an answer to every one that asketh you the reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear."

"Should all the forms that men desire
Assault my faith with treacherous art,
I'd call them vanity and lies,
And bind the Gospel to my heart."

II. We now come to consider the GROUND of the Apostle's avowal.

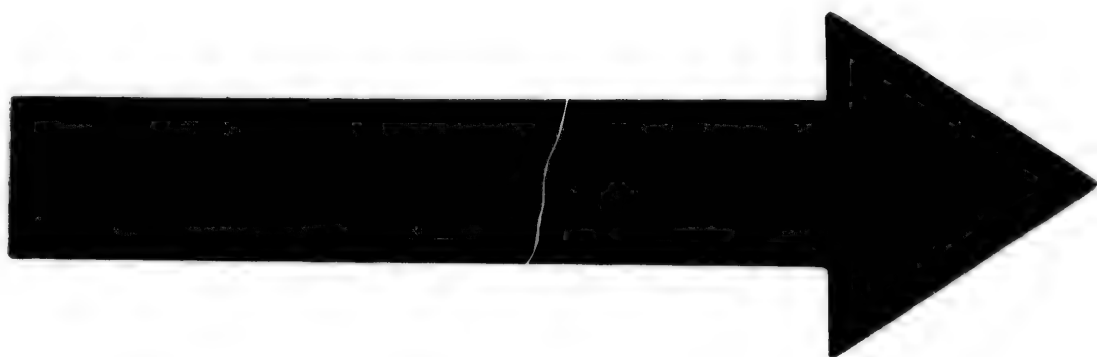
"I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth,"—that is to say, it is the instrument and vehicle of Divine power.

Some say that the Gospel exerts no influence upon its adherents—that it makes no difference in them—that it makes them neither better nor worse. Other religions do produce an effect, whether to make their subjects better or worse is another question. We can tell whether a man is a Jew or not if we come into contact with him. We can tell whether a man is a Mahometan or not, if we have any acquaintance with him; and we can tell whether a man is a Buddhist or not if on terms of intercourse with him. But we may be intimate with a man

who calls himself a Christian, from year end to year end, and not be able to find out what religion he is of, or whether he has any religion at all. We must admit that this is true with regard to a great number of professed Christians, but this is not in conflict with the Apostle's statement. What he says is that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that *believeth*, not to every one that *saith* he believes. It is easy to repeat, as multitudes do from week to week, the beautiful words of the ancient Church: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth; and in Jesus Christ, His only Son our Lord, which was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell, the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty: from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sin, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." It is one thing to believe with the mouth, but quite another thing to believe with the heart unto righteousness. Faith is not a mere tradition: it is the gift of God, the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. It is possible to imagine that we are believers in Christ while in reality we are unbelievers. Take an illustration from physical science. Many profess to believe that the human body, if allowed to rest quietly in water, will not sink; in other words, that a man, who cannot swim, can float. But it is questionable, if that faith were put to the test,

whether it would in many cases vindicate its reality. Dr. Franklin, the well-known American scientist, professed to have the faith in question, and it was unexpectedly put to the crucial test. He accidentally fell into deep water, and recalling the fact that the human body was buoyant, he kept perfectly still; and though he could not swim, he floated until some one came to his rescue. Here was one who professed to believe a certain thing, and proved by his conduct that his belief was a mental reality. But others, who thought they believed the same thing, have proved, by their conduct in the water, that they did not believe the scientific fact. They were drowned simply because they did not believe in reality as they imagined and professed that they did. Does not this exemplify the case of many professing Christians? They may seem to themselves to believe in the Son of God; but if they were put to a crucial test, such as martyrdom, they would soon become conscious that their faith was not a fact, but a mere phantom of the imagination.

We say then that the affirmation of the Apostle is *not* disproved. "The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth." He had ample evidence of its power in the case of the leather-Jailer at Philippi, who cried out in terror, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" and believing in God, with all his house, became a new creature in Christ Jesus: in the case of the conjurers at Ephesus who believed, and brought their books together, valued at fifty thousand pieces of silver, and burnt them before all: and in the case of the immoral and dissolute Corinthians, concerning



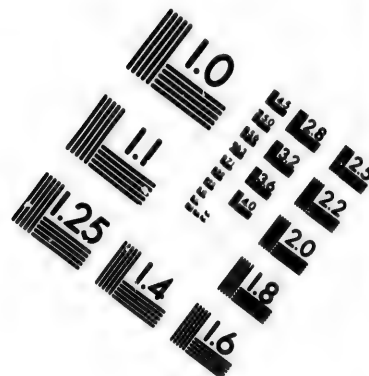
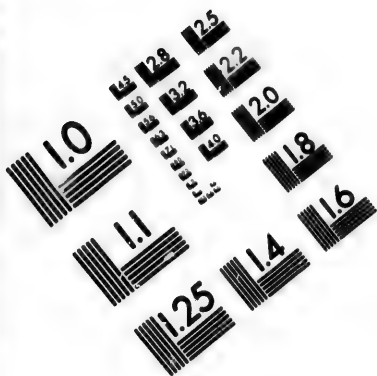
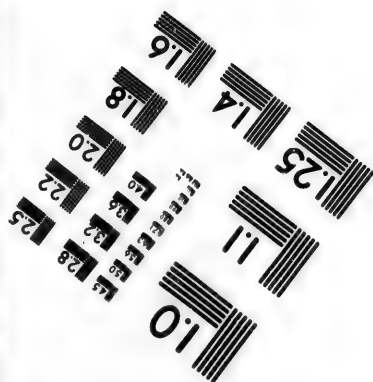
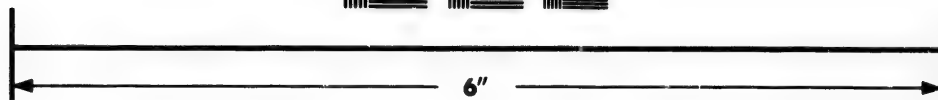
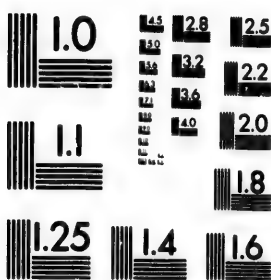


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whom the Apostle says, "ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Above all, he had evidence of the power of the Gospel in his own personal experience. What a change in his life, in his heart, in his character! He could say with all sincerity—"I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." The love of Christ and His cause had taken full possession of his mind, and "invested it with a glowing atmosphere of passion," and impelled him forward in one long career of toil and peril and suffering. He felt that he had one thing to do, which clung to him as part of his destiny, and which he steadfastly pursued "with the fortitude of a self-devoted victim." He travelled by sea and by land, he preached Christ and Him crucified in the East and in the West, he laboured day and night to make known the Gospel of the grace of God and to plant the standard of the Cross in the strongholds of heathenism, disdainful of ease, of pleasure, of opposition and of danger. He spent his life "in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness." "For to me to live was Christ, and to die was gain." Nor did he at the close of his unparalleled career regret his devotedness to the cause of Christ; though his last days were days of fiery trial, yet he did not fluctuate in his opinion or stagger in his hopes. Some interesting thoughts* have been suggested on this subject in connection with a small

* See Haldane's "Evidence of Divine Revelation."

personal request which the Apostle makes to Timothy in his last epistle, viz.: "The cloke that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest bring with thee." Where was the Apostle at this time? He was a prisoner at Rome. Why send for his cloke so many hundreds of miles away? He tells us that the winter was coming on, and he wanted to protect his aged limbs from the cold chills of winter. Why not borrow a garment from some of his numerous friends at Rome? Alas! that is easier said than done. For he tells us, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me." Poor dear man! tried for his life, and not a single friend to stand by him in the court, to sustain and to cheer him, while he had every reason to expect the martyr's fate. How did he feel in this terrible position? I am glad that I can give you his experience in his own beautiful words: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day." What a sublime spectacle is presented to us! The great Apostle about to undergo his great change which he had often longed for. What a change! One moment hissed and hooted by a brutal mob, the next moment applauded by the heavenly hosts; one moment in want of a cloke to cover his shivering frame, the next moment clothed upon with his house which is from heaven; one moment receiving the stroke from the headsman, the next moment invested with the crown of righteousness which shall never fade away.

Who then can entertain the shadow of a doubt that the gospel of Christ was the power of God unto salvation in the life and in the death of the great Apostle of the Gentiles ?

Nor has the gospel yet lost its ancient power. It is still mighty through God to the pulling down of the strongholds of Satan. We see its mighty influence in the South Sea Islands, where nations were born in a day. We see its mighty influence in Madagascar (now, alas ! invaded and outraged by an arrogant and selfish foreign power), where savages have been changed into saints, and where the blood of martyrs has been the seed of the church. We see in our own sea-girt isle ten thousand proofs that the heralds of the Cross have not laboured in vain, nor spent their strength for nought. Though we have to lament the existence of a large amount of ungodliness and religious formalism, yet there are multitudes throughout the land who are living epistles of Christ, known and read of all men, who live the life of heaven on earth, who, like the Divine Master, go about doing good.

I trust that many of you have felt the power of the gospel to save you from fear and foreboding, to breathe into you the breath of a new life, to shake off the fetters of your moral bondage, and to lead you forth to the liberty of the children of God. May God grant that all who hear me this day may receive the truth in the love of it, and be able to say with the Apostle and all true Christians, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth."

Let me impress upon you the importance of confession. Let us not be practically ashamed of Christ, but let us boldly confess Him before the world. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." Think of this, young men and maidens. Think of this, ye men and women of riper years. Think of this, ye aged pilgrims, "who have to the margin come and soon expect to die." It will be a sad thing to die without avowing your faith in Christ. Think of the solemn words of the Son of God, "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me and of My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed when He cometh in the glory of His Father, with the holy angels." He who loved you and died for you will come again a second time to inquire concerning your treatment of His gospel. How dreadful will it be to hear Him say then to any of you, "You were ashamed of Me and My words in a sinful and adulterous generation; now I am ashamed of you. I cannot acknowledge you amongst My people, I cannot receive you into My Father's house!" Consider this, ye that forget God. Now is the accepted time, to-day is the day of salvation.

THE DANGER OF PLAYING WITH ENTICEMENTS TO SIN.

BY THE REV. OWEN THOMAS, D.D., LIVERPOOL.

"Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?"

—PROV. vi. 27, 28.

ONE of the manifest characteristics of the Holy Scriptures, which particularly fits them to serve the special purposes the Infinite had in view in their inspiration, is the constant use made in them of common truths—truths with which men are perfectly acquainted in connection with this world and this life—to illustrate the great moral and spiritual principles, which are of such importance to them in their relation to God and the eternal world. In this feature of them they may be regarded as falling under the natural law of the human mind in the acquisition of any knowledge whatever. That law is, that the mind knows the unknown through the known. It gets at the distant through the near, and at the near through the nearer. It ascends to the Divine through the human, and through the material and the temporal mounts up to the spiritual and eternal. And, as a consequence, the teaching of the Scriptures, in the feature alluded to, is more specific and intelligible to such a

creature as man than it could be in any other mode. And not only that, but there is special fitness in this feature to make their teaching more efficient; to win the attention more easily and thoroughly, to leave a deeper and more lasting impression on the memory, and to secure stronger influences on the heart and the life. The truth thus wears such an aspect that a man must be extraordinarily neglectful to fail of its apprehension, and remarkably obdurate not to feel the importance thereof. And, as you all perceive, this is the feature it has in the words which we have read as a text: "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?"

These words are evidently intended to impress more powerfully on the mind of the young man, who is here directly addressed, the necessity of refraining altogether from the occasions of the shameful sin which is here particularly forbidden. That sin, as may be seen, is adultery, a sin which the age and circumstances of such an one make him specially exposed to, and a sin, forsooth, to which thousands of our young people fall a prey. The wise man, in the first place, directs him to the best defence against every tendency to this evil. That defence he finds in the remembrance of, attention to, and conformity with, the family training he received in the morning of life: "My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother." By the father's "commandment" and the mother's "law" we are to understand, I suppose, from the following verses the Divine law in the revelation of it which the nation then

possessed, and which godly parents, in obedience to the Divine injunction, were to minutely teach to their offspring. The parents of this young man had been particularly careful to instruct him in it. Now, my son, says the wise man, return to thy first years; remember the old house in which thou wast born, and the old hearth on which thou wast reared; call to mind how thy father used to take thee on his knees to teach thee; remember how solemnly and affectionately he would warn thee; think how earnestly he was wont to pray for thee: "keep thy father's commandment." Remember also how thy mother used to take thee to her bosom and counsel thee; remember her anxiety, remember her love, remember her tears. Watch over thyself, wherever thou goest, lest thou disobey the "commandment" which thou heardest thy father repeat; watch lest thou depart from the "law" communicated to thee by thy mother. And not only so, but view them with the greatest affection, consider them thy chief ornament; "bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck." Let them be the main objects of thy affection, the principal elements in thy beauty.

Then, in a manner remarkably elegant, he places before him the advantage he would reap by assuming towards the law the attitude prescribed. "When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee." The law, you see, is here personified as a wise counsellor, as a careful guardian, and as an interesting companion. "When thou goest, it shall lead thee:" in the most intricate places it will afford thee direction;

it will show thee the way thou shouldst go, and the place always thou shouldst put down thy foot. In all thy conduct it will be thy guide, to keep thee from straying from the safe path. "When thou sleepest, it shall keep thee:" when thou hast done with the duties, the difficulties, and the trials of the day, and in weariness throwest thyself into the arms of sleep, and when thou art quite unable to take care of thyself, it will be there guarding thee, and careful to keep all evil away. "And when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee:" when thou openest thy eyes in the early morn, in the deepest loneliness, thou shalt find it as a friendly, entertaining associate, standing by thy bedside, always with something useful and edifying to tell thee. Of that thou mayest be sure, for that is its character: "For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life." It will give thee light amid the densest darkness, and will be a safety to thee amid the direst perils.

And, especially, it will preserve thee against the particular dangers to which thy age and circumstances make thee peculiarly liable: "to keep thee from the evil woman, from the flattery of the tongue of a strange woman." And it is of prime importance to thee to be kept wholly from her: "Lust not after her beauty in thine heart; neither let her take thee with her eyelids." Keep thyself entirely from her; let her not have the slightest place in thy thoughts, nor the least advantage over thee. For if she shall, the consequence will be terrible; following her destroys all the elements of happiness in this world, and damns the soul in the next: "For by means of a whorish

woman a man is brought to a piece of bread." His worldly circumstances will be ruined; from the midst of plenty he will be reduced to want and hunger. And the injury does not stop there; no, the harm reaches farther, it stretches right away into another world: "And the adulteress will hunt for the precious life."

Then, in the words read by us as a text, the wise man seems to return again to the necessity of directly resisting the evil in the occasion of it, in the temptation to it, and that from the consideration of the impossibility of playing with the enticement without falling to the sin: "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?" All the commentators I have happened to consult, I find, take the words as a confirmation of what is already asserted in the preceding verse: the certainty that punishment will overtake the man addicted to this sin, that that is as certain as that the clothes will be scorched if fire is carried in the bosom, or that the feet will be burned if they tread on hot coals. But it appears to me that what is intended is what has been already remarked: not so much the certainty of punishment for living in sin, as the certainty of sin by playing with the temptation. That meaning seems quite as consonant with the spirit of the words themselves, and rather more consonant with the explanation or application of them in the following verse: "So he that goeth in to his neighbour's wife, whosoever toucheth her, shall not be innocent."

The words, it is seen, refer directly to a special sin, a sin, no doubt, that is very flourishing in our country,

and against which we ought to resolutely raise our voice, if we only knew how to do so without doing more harm than good. But they contain a principle, an important principle, of general application to every sin, and to every sin in every aspect of it, to which I should now like to invite your attention: *The impossibility for a man to play with the enticement to sin without falling a prey thereto.*

Now my object, as you see, is to speak not so much against the young man stealing the money or the property of his master, as against his dallying with the temptation to steal; not so much against adultery in act, as against playing with the lust; not so much against drunkenness, as against its occasions; not so much against sin itself, as against the seduction to it; and that, especially, for the reason we find in the text—the impossibility of dallying with temptation without falling to the sin. “Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?” Can one play with sin, without being at last taken captive by it?

The truth of our statement will appear if we take into consideration the following things:—

I. That every temptation presented to man addresses itself to a nature that is already corrupt, and therefore liable to take to it.

II. That man, in playing with the temptation, puts himself directly in the way that leads naturally to the sin.

III. That playing with the temptation to any evil

shows some degree of bias in the nature to that particular evil.

IV. That playing with temptation brings man into contact with sin only on its pleasurable side, and thus gives it an advantage to make an impression favourable to itself on the mind.

V. That man, through playing with temptation, weakens his moral power to resist the sin, and gradually gets so debilitated as to be too weak to oppose it.

VI. That man, by playing with temptation, at last tempts the Spirit of God to withdraw His protection from him, and to leave him to himself, and a prey to his lust. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?"

I. EVERY TEMPTATION PRESENTED TO MAN ADDRESSES ITSELF TO A NATURE THAT IS ALREADY CORRUPT, AND THEREFORE LIABLE TO RESPOND TO IT.

It appears from the history of mankind that there is force enough in temptation, by keeping the mind in fellowship with it, to influence even holy creatures so as to make them fall. So it happened with our first parents in Eden. They were created "in God's image," "in righteousness and true holiness;" and yet, "when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." I do not profess to understand the philosophy or the metaphysics of the subject. You could soon

entangle me by catechising me. How did a holy creature sin? How did man disobey, with nothing in his heart but the principle of obedience? I cannot trace the origin of the evil. But the fact remains and is sufficiently manifest. The evil has come in, and it has come in somehow into our nature through the communion of the mind with the temptation to it. Now, if there was such force in temptation when there was nothing but holiness in the mind, what must be its power to a creature that is already depraved? But that is the condition of mankind in their present estate. "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." "All, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin." "We are by nature the children of wrath." "From the womb we have gone astray, from birth we err, shapen in iniquity, of flesh we are born flesh." This is the history of the race. We are all members of a body that has fallen, branches of a tree whose roots are poisoned. The experience of the race through the ages bears testimony to this truth. Men in every generation, in every country, among every nation, of every age, of every grade, under every circumstance, of every natural power, of every kind of culture mental and moral, prove themselves to be corrupt. Wherever you find a man, you find a sinner. It were as difficult for you to find a man without a body to him, as a man without sin in him, and that sin, by nature, reigning in him. This is not a truth of revelation in an exclusive sense. All mankind, with a few exceptions, acknowledge it; and all the religions of the world, in some aspect or other, suppose it. What specially distinguishes the Bible in

relation to this subject is, that it shows us how man came to this estate, and in particular that it reveals to us the glorious way wherein man may be delivered from it. Thus man is disposed by his nature to receive moral hurt from the temptation, and, when it is presented to him, to be caught in its entanglements and fall a prey to it.

One has been in this world, and only One, who was quite otherwise. He was born "that Holy Thing." He lived all His life sinless. "He knew not sin." "Who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth." "Holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." He was in the midst of sinners, "all the publicans and sinners drawing near unto Him," touching Him, and yet, amid them, separate from them, without contracting a single stain from them. He had true humanity, but humanity perfectly spotless. He performed not a single act, spoke not a single word, cast not a single look, conceived not a single thought, cherished not a single feeling, that diverged in the slightest degree, even in the sight of the Infinite Himself, from perfect integrity. He was tempted; but though "tempted in all things like as we are, yet without sin." The temptation possessed no influence over Him. "The prince of this world cometh, and he hath nothing in Me;" no materials to correspond to his attacks so as to give him an advantage to overcome Me; no corruption for the temptation by means of it to inflict an injury on Me. The temptation was simply *without* Him; there was no confederate *within*, and therefore it could effect no moral damage. His nature was filled to the brim with holiness, so that the fiery darts

of the devil were at once quenched in Him. But the quality of our spirits, the nature of our hearts, is unholy and depraved. The bias of our nature is towards sin, the original propensity of our minds is in the direction of evil. And here, precious soul, lies thy danger to play with temptation. There is something *in* thee that is advantageous to it. If the fire is in the temptation, the powder is in thy nature ; and, for thy life's sake, beware that the two come not in contact, else there will happen a terrible explosion.

The whole moral nature of man is impaired. The natural inclination of his mind is to evil. He must be born again, created anew in Christ Jesus, in order to bring his heart to love holiness, and, even after being born again, it is needful he should exercise constant care and vigilance and endeavour to keep himself pure. But to fall to sin is something natural and easy to him—he is not called upon to encounter serious obstacles, deny his chiefest and strongest pleasures, pull out the right eye, or cut off the right hand in order thereto. Now the fact that such an one, so liable to sin, plays with the temptation, makes it on that ground impossible but that he should fall into the sin. Just as if you were to think of some infectious disease ravaging a town or a neighbourhood. In such a case no one is perfectly safe. The healthiest and strongest might come in contact with it and fall victims to it. But it is well known that in some constitutions there is a predisposition to certain kinds of sickness, something in them that makes them more subject than others to those particular diseases ; and when those specific forms of bodily ailments visit a neighbourhood,

they stand in greater danger than their neighbours. I am not enough of a physician to assign the reason for this, to decide whether it rises from an original distemper in the constitution, or the general debility of the body, or some particular weakness in the specific organ or tissue that is directly attacked by the disease. The fact, however, is universally admitted. Now, the moral deterioration of mankind is such as to expose them to the various assaults of corruption that frequently beset them in the forms of temptation; and no one can be safe, in a world so unwholesome as ours, without the greatest care and watchfulness. And if any one boldly frequents infectious places, dallying and fondling the disease, it is impossible for him, possessing the nature he does, to escape the contagion.

One night, a few weeks ago, in the town where I live, as I was walking along Shaw Street, opposite the Collegiate, I observed a respectable man walking in front of me. As I came up to him, I noticed some smoke issuing from his clothes. I turned round and remarked that I feared, seeing the smoke coming out, he carried fire in his clothes. He had not observed the smoke, and, in his fright, threw open his coat; and thereupon, and in a shorter time than it takes me to tell it, by the admission of the outside air to the fire smouldering within, that side of his clothes immediately flamed up. Now, that is the nature of the sinner. He carries within him combustible materials, ready for fire. Indeed, the fire already burns within him, scorching up every holy feeling in his heart, and he need only open his bosom, and give opportunity to the breeze of tempta-

tion to fan it, to kindle it to a flame, and put himself in danger of being altogether burned. May the Spirit of God Himself speak! "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one go upon hot coals, and his feet not be burned?"

II. MAN, IN PLAYING WITH THE TEMPTATION, PUTS HIMSELF DIRECTLY IN THE WAY THAT LEADS NATURALLY TO THE SIN.

Although, as has already been observed, the natural state of a man's heart since the Fall is unholy, and that there is an original bent in him towards what is evil, yet sin, in the special forms it takes in his mind as well as in his public life, subjects him to itself through certain allurements. He is enticed to sin in some way or other. Every sin has certain enticements peculiar to itself. And the great moral defect of thousands is, that they do not recognise the sin in the enticement thereto. Look at the temptations or enticements to sin, and at men playing with them. How did that young man become a thief? Was it the first thing he did to steal his employer's money, or forge his handwriting to the cheque on the bank, or break into his neighbour's house and carry away his property? Oh no. How then? How? He began by appropriating to himself his master's money without his knowledge, to spend for some purpose that was not the best, with the view of returning it again, without his master's knowledge, when his salary would become due. He was not sufficiently brave and candid to go to his master and borrow a small sum; but he was sufficiently unprincipled to take it without

his permission, and perhaps sufficiently honest for a while to return it when his own money came to hand. He did so once, twice, and again, continuing to play with the temptation to steal. But one day it was inconvenient—*inconvenient*, yes, that is his word—to pay back; he wanted all the money he had for something else; therefore he postponed till some other season. But in the meantime, before that season came round, he needed to borrow again, and again he took of his master's money, thus adding to his defalcations. And thus continuing to play with the temptation, and finding himself hemmed in by difficulties he felt himself unable to surmount, at last he says to himself—"I cannot pay back; there is no way of my doing it; indeed, I am not quite sure that I ought; I do not get anything like the wages I am entitled to: however, nobody except myself knows of it; I shall not think of returning them, unless, in future years, I become rich, when repayment will be easy; but I am resolved that I shall not abstract money thus again." But, alas! he did not stop there. He went on in the same direction—on—on—on. Where is he to-night? Where too, but in penal servitude, having ruined his own character for ever, having broken his mother's heart and brought her to a premature grave, and having drawn on all his relations grief and sorrow and disgrace and shame. By playing with the temptation he developed into a thief.

So it is with every sin. See that man in whose word no one puts confidence, and after whom you would never like to repeat a tale unless confirmed by another's testimony. How did the man become so? At once?

Certainly not; he began by relating, perhaps, for the sake of amusement some groundless tales of his own invention. In certain circles he found himself arresting considerable attention, and occasioning considerable merriment. He surrendered himself to the temptation, and sedulously cherished the propensity, till by to-day he is proverbial for his untruthfulness; he believes his own falsehoods, and has almost lost the power to distinguish between the true and the false.

Thousands in our country play weekly, if not daily, with intoxicating drinks, resorting regularly to public-houses, spending much precious time in the debasing society of immoral characters, and thus dally with the temptation to drunkenness.

Now, concerning those that thus play with the temptation to any sin, there cannot be any doubt that they place themselves in the way that leads directly to it. Consequently, the morality of Holy Writ not only positively forbids the sin itself, but also all the occasions to it and the first motions of the heart towards it. "Lie not one to another." "Let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." "Truth must be spoken in the heart." Not only is it against stealing, but it forbids us to "covet that which is our neighbour's." Not only it prohibits murder, but declares that every one that is "angry with his brother without a cause is guilty of murder;" and not only that, but adds, "make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go; lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul." Not only it condemns and forbids adultery, but also the

mere looking after a woman in order to feed lust. It says, "Be not drunk with wine;" yea, it says more, "Be not among wine-bibbers;" "look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright." That is the character of Bible morality. And as that is the morality of the book, it ought to be the morality of the heart. The power of a moral principle is to show itself, not by going as near as possible to the sin without falling to it, but by keeping as far as possible from it; not by going as near the precipice as possible without falling over, but by walking in the middle of the road, far from every danger. "Avoid every appearance of evil." "Hate even the garment spotted by the flesh."

The old Greek poet, as some of you remember, describing the wanderings of Ulysses in the Mediterranean Sea, takes him past the island where the Syrens sang so charmingly that the sailors who passed that way could not resist the temptation to land, whereupon the cruel sisters killed them and feasted on their bodies. But he had been instructed by Circe, as a protection to himself and his friends, to put melted wax in the mariners' ears when they approached the island so that they might not hear the seductive music, and to cause them to bind him fast to the mast so that, though hearing the enchanting notes, and notwithstanding every desire to land under the influence of the sweet music, he might be totally unable to steer the ship in the direction of the shore. And so he and they were preserved in safety (*Odyssey*, xii. 39-208). And do you desire not to fall into the sin? Shut your ears that you hear not the voice of the temptation; turn

away your eyes from looking at it; bind yourselves to something strong enough to keep you from falling into its snare. When a man plays with the temptation, he is in the middle of the road which leads into the sin.

Young people, do you see the meaning of all this? Do you understand where reading impure books, looking at unchaste pictures, using indecent language, associating with low and degraded characters, following old corrupt customs, lead to? Do you perceive where frequenting public-houses, sitting over the intoxicating cup, delighting in the society, and having pleasure in the smell and taste of the drink, terminate? It behoves thee, who playest with the temptation, to be warned in time. Thou art near the edge—a few more steps and thou wilt topple over. The fire is in thy bosom, thou canst not tell the moment thou wilt be ablaze. “Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on coals of fire, and his feet not be burned?”

III. PLAYING WITH THE TEMPTATION TO ANY EVIL SHOWS SOME DEGREE OF BIAS IN THE NATURE TO THAT PARTICULAR EVIL

We have already observed that the history of mankind bears testimony to the influence exerted by the fellowship of the mind with the temptation over even a holy creature to lead him into sin. At the same time, it is a truth, and an important truth, that it is in the *communion of the mind with the temptation* that power resides; and if there be in the mind a sufficient amount of virtue—of virtue the direct opposite of the sin to which the temptation prompts—to keep a man on his

guard from playing with it, he is perfectly safe from any injury that may be inflicted by it. In truth, when it is so, the temptation is to him no longer a temptation. To the young man, chaste and pure, there is no force in the seductions of the "strange woman." To the sober man, the thorough abstainer, there is no enticement in the smell and taste of the drink, in the noise and laughter of the tavern. He has too much of that which is opposed to the sin to admit it. That is the signification, it is supposed, but in an unutterably higher sense, of those words—"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man." "He cannot be tempted with evil." Why not? There is too much goodness in Him. In the infinite goodness of His nature, He rises immeasurably above the possibility of being tempted to anything contrary to that goodness. Now the same thing holds true of man in proportion to the power of holiness in him and the resistance of his heart to sin. This reveals itself in not giving place to the temptation, in not permitting it to have a footing in the mind. When he hates the *sin* with a perfect hatred, the *temptation* to it is hateful to him; and he avoids, not only the sin itself, but all occasions to it, and all things that might lead him thereto. Just as a man's love to his friend makes him embrace every opportunity to hold fellowship with him. See how the godly man's attachment to God makes him lay hold of every opportunity of communing with Him. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after Thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God:

when shall I come and appear before God?" "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." "Lord, I have loved the habitation of Thy house, and the place where Thine honour dwelleth." His love to God makes him take every advantage to enter into communion with Him and taste the enjoyment consequent thereupon. Similarly, in his hatred of sin, he dislikes and avoids everything that in any way tends to it. On the other hand, if a man allows his heart to dally with any lust, if he finds himself turning to it and delighting in it, looking at it again and again, giving it place often in his meditations, playing thus with the temptation, it is obvious that there is a special inclination in the man to the sin; and though, perhaps, he would tremble at the actual commission of it, yet he may be sure that outside considerations alone make him refrain, and not the principle of his own heart.

That our nature, since the Fall, is corrupt, we have already stated, and that, therefore, we are all, in a special manner, liable to play with temptations to particular sins. But, connected with this, there is another important truth. We have all "the sin ready to beset us;" there is in each one of us separately some predisposition to some particular sin, just as in some bodily constitutions there is a predisposition to certain fevers. This predisposition is often hereditary, running in the family blood, making the family in all its branches liable to those fevers. We often witness the same thing morally. Certain forms of

sin seem to inhere in the blood of some families. Sometimes falsehood, sometimes fraud, sometimes drunkenness, sometimes unchastity, run as it were through some families, and that for generations, making those families a byword and a reproach in their respective neighbourhoods. But, independently of what may be deemed hereditary, there may be something in a man's natural organism making him incline beforehand to a special sin, and thus placing him under an obligation to exercise special vigilance against that sin. One has the physical lusts strong in him, and is therefore more liable to sins of the flesh; another the mental appetencies, and therefore more liable to the sins of the spirit. One is naturally of a disposition lively, agile, hot, ardent, and therefore liable to levity on the one hand, or to recklessness on the other; another is naturally heavy, phlegmatic, luxurious, torpid, and consequently liable to grow careless, indolent, lazy, dull, if not sullen and ill-tempered. One is naturally ambitious and self-asserting, and therefore inclined to pride and vainglory; another naturally more sensual and earthly, and therefore inclined to gluttony and drunkenness. Natural predispositions I have called these; but there are others, the result of habit only, equally powerful in their influence, and equally dangerous if any advantage be given them to show themselves. And sometimes—no, not sometimes, but often, forsooth! the natural predispositions are mightily strengthened by habit.

Now, when a man plays with any temptation, it is a proof positive of some bias already in the mind to the sin which is the direct object of the temptation. The

playing with the temptation is nothing else than the heart reaching out after the sin, the lust conceiving in the mind. Look at Balaam. Messengers from Balak come to him, with the reward of unrighteousness in their hand, to fetch him to curse Israel. He seems to have at once doubted the propriety of doing so, whilst at the same time he evinced no reluctance to go. However, he persuades them to remain with him that night that he might learn the will of the Lord. He is positively told not to go with them; and so, but only half-relating what the Lord told him, he sends them away, saying the Lord refused to let him accompany them, evidently leaving the impression on their minds that he personally was quite prepared, if only permission were granted him. But Balak sends other messengers—more numerous and honourable than the first, and doubtless with a larger reward in their hands, and promising him much honour, if he only consented to go. Then he pretends to be wonderfully devout: "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more. Now, therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more" (Lev. xxii. 18, 19). Perhaps He has changed His mind; peradventure He may let me come. I should like personally to come; and I will, if I am not stopped. By lodging the messengers he clearly showed that the wish of his mind was to go with them. Thus when a man lodges the temptation in his mind, dandles the lust in his heart, obviously he leans to the sin itself. You cannot help the assault; it is not your fault that you are

tempted; Jesus Christ Himself was tempted. The evil is to lodge the temptation in the mind; to listen to the voice of the tempter; to delay saying to him, "Get thee behind me, Satan;" to give the "lust" time and opportunity to "conceive" and "to bring forth lust" (James i. 15). Here, then, lies the special danger of playing with the temptation, and the impossibility of a man doing so without falling a prey to the sin. Art thou careless of the truth? The bias of thy heart is to falsehood; watch lest thou fall into the sin. Dost thou play with money not thine own? Beware! thou art not far from being a thief. Dost thou repair to the public-house, and delight in its society? Thou walkest straight in the way that leads to drunkenness; and if for no other reason than the pleasure thou findest in the temptation, thou shouldst keep aloof from it for ever. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be burned?"

IV. PLAYING WITH TEMPTATION ONLY BRINGS MAN INTO CONTACT WITH SIN ON ITS AGREEABLE SIDE, AND THUS GIVES IT AN ADVANTAGE TO MAKE AN IMPRESSION FAVOURABLE TO ITSELF ON THE MIND.

It must be confessed that sin has its pleasure. True that it is but low and empty and unsubstantial, and its continuance but short and uncertain. Nevertheless it exists; and not only that, but it is present, and within reach. It means the immediate satisfaction of the depraved propensities of the nature; and, in some of its forms, directs itself especially to the physical ap-

petencies and lusts, and in all its forms flatters the self-seeking, the self-indulgence, and the self-will of the creature. It thus charms thousands on thousands to follow it; so much so that there is no force in any consideration presented to their minds to induce them to make an effort to disentangle themselves and depart from it. The man sacrifices on the altar of his lust the health of his body, the comfort of his family, his worldly circumstances, his social respectability, his natural life, and the everlasting happiness of his immortal soul. But only the *pleasure* of sin is in the temptation. There is to be seen only the graceful form, the lovely face, the cheerful look, and the beautiful robes; there is to be heard only the musical voice, the kind words, the melodious song, and the merry laugh; there is to be touched only the soft hand and the honied kiss; nothing to be beheld but the attractive appearance in order to fascinate. The heart full of deceit, the spirit steeped in treachery, and the bottle full of poison, are completely hid, so that the poor wretch imagines not that there is any peril to be feared, or any hurt to be received. Nothing is in sight save the pleasure. "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." There were other things to be seen had she only looked—God's prohibition, God's threat, God's authority,—guilt, shame, death. But the temptation exhibited none of these; only some imaginary and unsubstantial beauty and gain in order to deceive. But by giving way to the tempta-

tion, for the sake of imaginary pleasures, she found misery true and real. "I saw," said Achan, "among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it." Other things were to be seen: God's prohibition, Israel troubled, the camp turned to an accursed thing, the Lord turning His back on His people and their consequent flight before their enemies, the stoning of himself and family with stones. But the temptation showed none of these things, nothing but the goodly garment, the gold, and the silver; and looking at these things Achan coveted them, and after coveting them he took them, and after taking them he hid them but notwithstanding the concealment, he is caught, is stoned to death and burned into ashes in fire.

When children, you used to go a-fishing. Were you wont to show the hook to the fish? Oh no! You had the hook, but you put it out of sight—you hid it in the bait; and the fish, eating the bait, swallowed the hook; and the tiny creature which a minute before played glee-fully in his element is caught and put in the basket. So the temptation acts—it shows the bait, but hides the hook, and so catches and kills. See that young man who has enlisted to be a soldier. There he goes with the recruiting officer to the magistrate to be sworn in. How has he been enticed to this? How? Was it by reflecting on the small wages, the hard fare, the severe drill, the minute discipline, the complete obedience he must yield, the bloody war, the terrible fighting, the

sharp sword piercing his body and wounding him mortally, the fiery shell splitting his head and slaying him on the spot, his corpse lying on the field far from his native land, and buried there, where none of his relatives will ever know the place of his tomb, and, thinking on those things, he enlisted a soldier? Thinking on those things! Why, if he had only thought on one of them, he would hardly ever have done such a thing. How, then, did it happen? Oh, he was enticed by the red regimentals, the neat appearance, the life he imagined to be idle, the faint hope of a pension in his old days, and especially the liberty he promised to himself—liberty from a father's warnings, a mother's tears, and sisters' solicitude—liberty to run to every excess of riot and ungodliness. Something fascinating, in the opinion of the young man, in the soldier's life led him astray.

In the same manner precisely the temptation to sin influences the mind. How was that man tempted to become a thief? He thought of the sorrow he would bring his parents, the disgrace he would entail on his brothers and sisters, the damage he would inflict on his own character, the shame he would experience in being detected, put in prison, and led thence on the day of trial to a court of law, the pain he would feel in seeing and hearing his former friends obliged to testify against him, his anxiety about the verdict, the pang on hearing the word "*guilty*," the sentence of hard labour for two years, the reproach attaching to him now as long as he lives, and the ruinous influence all this would exert over him to drive him farther in the same career, till he would finish his wretched course in penal servitude, the con-

science being now awakened and beginning to gnaw terribly, and securing to himself wretchedness more horrible in the world to come; and thinking on these things, he became a thief? Alas! no! The poor wretch never thought of these things, else he would have been preserved from such ways. He thought of nothing but of the opportune advantage to obtain without trouble, and in a short time, what by means of ordinary labour he could not attain for many long years, nor, perhaps, ever, and thus enjoy easily some present pleasure, which, according to the temptation, he could not reap any other way. The result was, he became a thief.

How did that young man fall a prey to uncleanness? He thought of the "wound and the reproach," and the shame that will not be obliterated? He thought of the "dart striking through his liver," and that "her house is the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death?" Oh no! but he took to be persuaded by "her much fair speech, and to be forced with the flattering of her lips," and "so he went after her straightway as an ox goeth to the slaughter, as a bird hasteth to the snare, and knoweth not that it is for his life" (Prov. vii. 21-23). He looked only at what was attractive in the sin, and so fell a prey to it.

How did the other become a drunkard? He thought of the woe, the sorrow, the contentions, the babbling, the wounds without cause, the redness of eyes, and the bite like the serpent's and the sting like the adder's? Oh no; none of these things were in his thoughts. All he saw was the rioting and wantonness, the boisterous companions, the delightful sensations, the oblivion of all grief;

the pleasure of sin alone was present to his mind, casting aside every other consideration whatsoever. And so it is with the temptation to every sin. And inasmuch as the enjoyment of sin only is shown in the temptation, you see the impossibility for any one to dally with it without falling a prey to it. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be burned?"

V. MAN, THROUGH PLAYING WITH TEMPTATION, WEAKENS HIS MORAL RESISTANCE TO THE SIN, AND GRADUALLY GETS SO WEAK THAT HE CANNOT RESIST IT.

This is perfectly obvious. As already shown, playing with the temptation is nothing else than the heart stretching forth its tendrils after the sin, and is therefore in itself sinful, injuring the moral sense, and from the first tending to weaken and destroy it. And by dallying with the temptation the lusting after the sin increases, the bias of the mind towards it gathers strength, the consideration of the evil in it is lost, its enjoyment appears more desirable, the heart's love of it invents plausible excuses for it, till at last the temptation takes advantage of, and unites itself to, the lust of the heart, and the poor fellow falls a prey to it. At the outset, the temptation—whether from the evil one or evil men, or from the special circumstances in which the man finds himself—only suggests to him the sin, by presenting it before his mind; so far the man is not responsible for it, it is not a sin to him. But when a man is pleased with the suggestion, entertains it in his mind, and delights in the corrupt image pictured by his imagination, he begins

to play with temptation, and his moral force begins to be undermined. One depraved thought, by cherishing it, invites another, and it another, and so on in succession, till the whole soul is polluted to such a degree that it only sees materials for uncleanness in all things. The unclean spirit, finding the mind empty and unoccupied, invites seven others, worse than himself, to a joint occupation with himself, and thus possess him entirely for purposes of uncleanness. Once a man takes to play with temptation and finds some kind of pleasure therein, he wants it again and again, till by degrees it becomes something indispensable to him, something he feels perfectly uncomfortable without. But such is the nature of the pleasure that, by growing familiar with it, it is necessary to have more of it and to devote oneself more thoroughly to it, in order to acquire the same agreeable sensation through it: and thus the lust grows in intensity and gains tremendous power over the mind. But such a growth cannot take place save at the expense of the moral stamina of the soul. Playing with temptation eats away the moral energy. The conscience at last gets so depraved that it permits unforbidden what it once condemned unambiguously and emphatically; and the lust takes advantage of every concession made it to obtain other concessions of the same nature, till before long the whole moral region of the soul is devastated by it. And so, step by step, almost unwittingly to himself, the man finds himself utterly powerless to resist the temptation, and falls a prey to the sin. The natural laws of the man's mind become a strength to his corruption, and favour and accelerate his ruin. By playing with the

temptation, the poor unfortunate is drawn on, on, on, till at last he is captive to it. So it is with every sin. Look at that young man developing into a thief. He began by giving room in his mind to the temptation to use upon himself that which was not his own ; to appropriate, under the guise of borrowing, the money of his employer. He went on thus for some time, recouping them every penny. But his conscience gradually loses its tenderness, and in the face of a certain emergency he became sufficiently hard to keep them. He committed literally the act of stealing. By doing so once, he became weaker to resist the temptation to repeat it, and that over and over again, till his career came to its termination in a place where thieves receive their severest punishment.

Think of the other falling a victim to adultery. The temptation attacks the mind, and perchance finds a place in it. But the unclean thoughts settle down into unchaste meditations ; the unchaste meditations develop into sensual desires ; the sensual desires break forth into lascivious conversation ; and the lascivious conversation terminates in shameless adultery. As the lust gains strength, it grows bolder in its claims ; it is not satisfied to-day with the homage paid it yesterday ; and as its attacking power gains, the moral power of the soul to resist diminishes, till at last it is totally powerless to do so.

Contemplate that drunkard. How did he come to such a state ? He was not born a drunkard. He was not wont to intoxicate himself with his mother's milk. He was a grown-up lad possibly before he ever tasted the intoxicating cup. But somehow, through joining

perhaps with the provident club, which held its meetings in the public-house, he began to drink. Soon he got to resort thither occasionally, besides on the club night; he becomes interested in the jolly company and the idle jests; he begins to like the drink, he begins to feel elated under its seductive influence; that sense of elation grows till at last he feels uncomfortable without it. But the nature of his constitution, and the nature of the drink, are such that he cannot reproduce the comfortable sensation without swelling the dose. The quantity which produced that sensation a month or two ago cannot create it now. He must have more or something stronger to produce the same felicitous effects, as he calls them; and at last so much must be consumed that, under its influence, he got drunk. Thus he sank, from step to step, and without in the least intending it, and without thinking anything of the peril, by playing with the temptation, a victim to the sin. And so he went on from drunkenness to drunkenness. He is now a perfect slave to it. His appetite for that which reduces him to such degradation is terrible and insatiable. "When I shall awake, I will seek it yet again."

If you wish to see the helplessness into which man reduces himself through playing with temptation, look at those who eat opium or drink laudanum. Under the influence of a few drops or a few grains at first, the man experiences a degree of exemption from the bodily pain which harassed him; the pain, however, returns again, and again he resorts to the remedy, and so on time after time. But there is a marvellous charm in it to the poor creature under its influence; his mind is so active, his

imagination so fertile, that he experiences a pleasure perfectly new and strange to him whilst the impulse of the dose continues. He is drawn to it over and over again. But to obtain the same agreeable sensation the quantity of the dose must be increased time after time, till at last a sufficient amount is taken to throw the constitution into a state of complete torpidity, and to reduce it to a state of utter helplessness. Look at some of the greatest giants of genius and learning, Coleridge and De Quincey, under its influence, made captive by it, so that they have no control over themselves; their great faculties, for hours every day, so locked up that they could make no use of them. De Quincey begins by taking a few drops to soothe for a while the toothache. He gets the relief, but at the same time he tastes a kind of pleasure that soon subjugates him to itself. The temptation grows stronger, and he weaker to resist it, so that the dose that began with twenty drops increases to eight thousand drops of laudanum in a day (De Quincey's Works, vol. i. p. 193, 194, 234. Edinburgh, 1862). And, according to the testimony of one who had the best opportunity for a whole year of observing his habits in her father's house, look at him, after taking an ounce of laudanum in the morning, and ruining his strength for the day, lying for hours on the rug in front of the fire in his room, his head resting on his book, and his arms folded, completely lost in the unnatural sleep, under the influence of the ruinous dose (Mrs. Gordon's "Memoir of Professor Wilson," vol. ii. p. 158. Edinburgh, 1862). Having commenced by playing with the temptation, he became too weak to resist it, and was taken

captive by it. And that is the great law under which the human mind works in respect of every sin.

And that is not all, but playing with the temptation keeps a man from the only means through which he might acquire strength to overcome the sin. The Bible becomes a strange book, religious services and holy conversations grow insipid, secret prayer is totally neglected, and every service in connection with the worship of God is to him a burden and vexation. And when, in virtue of an old habit, or to keep up appearances, he comes to the forms of the service, his playing with temptation has quite slain his spirit. If he comes to the Lord's house, his mind wanders in company with his lust; if he goes, under some stress, to try to pray, his conscience condemns him, so that he has no strength to grasp the blessing; if he approaches the Lord's table on the Sunday, to him there is no "communion of the body" and "communion of the blood" of Christ, having been corrupting himself on the Saturday at the devil's table. And thus his moral debility increases, and the probability grows stronger that he will fall a prey to the sin with which he plays. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be burned?"

VI. MAN, BY PLAYING WITH TEMPTATION, AT LAST TEMPTS THE SPIRIT OF GOD TO WITHDRAW HIS PROTECTION FROM HIM, AND TO LEAVE HIM TO HIMSELF, AND A PREY TO HIS LUST.

The Holy Scriptures teach, it is clear, that the Spirit of the Lord exerts His influence in different ways to

keep one from sin. Sometimes He overrules external circumstances in such a manner as to deny him the opportunities to commit the sin he is inclined to; so that, though the lust possibly works in him mightily, the opportunity to satisfy it is not within his reach. Thus Judas Iscariot was about betraying Jesus Christ (John xii. 4), but wanted "opportunity to betray Him" (Matt. xxvi. 16). At other times, when the opportunity is advantageous and the *outside* temptation strong, the Spirit of the Lord so influences the mind by means of certain reflections, that the temptation fails in its effect upon him; his mind being not only disinclined, but totally opposed to the sin. "How can I do," asked Joseph, "this great wickedness, and sin against God?" And, sometimes, having reached the very brink of the sin, the great God wonderfully intervenes to prevent it, as with Abimelech, to keep him from Sarah (Gen. xx. 2-9), and with David to keep him from shedding innocent blood (1 Sam. xxv. 13-35). Of God's mercy similar deliverances are often vouchsafed now. "With the temptation there is a way of escape" (1 Cor. x. 13). The young man, in the face of the temptation that suddenly attacks him, the fierce gust from the bottomless pit which threatens to blow him down, has grace to remember there and then the godly advices he received in his infancy, the prayers of his father and mother, their present anxiety in relation to him, the great sorrow it would occasion them to hear that he had strayed from the paths of virtue, the importance and value of a good character to him in his relation to this world and the present life, and the terrible consequences, reaching to

the other world, following a career of irreligion and ungodliness ; and under the influence of such considerations as these, he quite overcomes the temptation, and "his soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler." But when a man continues to play with temptation, permitting his heart always to run in the channel of his lust, beginning to give way to his first impulses and desires, he vexes and grieves God's Spirit, and gradually offends Him so much that He withdraws from him, withholds His protection, and allows the temptation in all its force to assault him at a time when lust is strong and the external opportunity perfectly advantageous. And the result is, he falls a prey to the temptation. Look again at Judas. For a long while now he plays with the temptation. He is already a thief, and takes advantage even of his apostolic office, and in the society of Jesus, to feed the lust that lords over him. At last, in the strength of the same lust, which by this time has gathered terrific force in his mind, he determines to betray his Master to His enemies. How long the temptation to do it besieged his mind before yielding we cannot tell. But the acquiescence is at length won. Nothing now is needed but the "opportunity." And Providence gives that ; the wonderful permission is granted, "What thou doest, do quickly" (John xiii. 27). Oh, it is frightful when the temptation and the opportunity meet ! The destruction of the man is near, sin makes a prey of him. See Samson jesting with Delilah, and with the enticement to reveal to her the secret of his mighty strength. To that strength the strongest "cords became as flax that was burnt with fire."

But at last, as he was sleeping on her knees, lo, his hair is cut; his Nazaritic vow is gone, his strength has departed. "The Philistines be upon thee, Samson!" And he awoke out of his sleep, and said, "I will go out as at other times before, and shake myself. And he wist not that the Lord was departed from him." And, poor man, there he is, caught, bound, imprisoned, grinding in the prison-house (Judges xvi. 5-21). Beloved souls! believe that it is impossible to play with the temptation without falling a prey to the sin. "Can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burned? Can one walk on hot coals, and his feet not be burned?"

Is there any one here who has "taken fire in his bosom," and has had his clothes burnt; having been subjected to sin, and gone a prey to it? Blessed be God, his case is not yet hopeless. We have in the Gospel one that "receives sinners;" and "we have redemption in His blood, even the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of His grace;" and there is virtue enough, to-night, in His blood to cleanse thee also from all sin. If the fire kindles, it is not the fire of hell yet; and whilst on earth, however great thy guilt, however great thy uncleanness, however great thy misery, thou art within reach of a scheme with power enough in it to lift thy iniquity from thee, to overcome it within thee, and to renew thee through grace to the spotless purity of the Godhead Himself. But beware, for the sake of thy immortal soul, of procrastinating in order to play a little longer with sin, lest the Spirit of God depart from thee, and leave thee for ever a prey to thy lust.

THE TWO CHARACTERS.

BY THE REV. EDWARD MATTHEWS, BRIDGEND.

"I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."—Ps. xxxvii. 35-37.

THE word "perfect" in the Old Testament is generally used in the same sense as the word "godly" in the New. This "perfect" man is he "who feareth God and escheweth evil." His perfection is that of an earthly saint, not that of a heavenly saint. It is the same as the perfection of Job, the perfection of principle, the perfection of purpose and aim. But this perfection of purpose and aim is not satisfied without its actual realisation in conduct. Like Paul, it stretches forward and upward, "even to the resurrection of the dead." "Not that it has already attained," or is already exemplified in life and conduct; but "it follows after"—after—after, on and on.

Very strong language is used to set forth the integrity of Lot, though we are not ignorant of drawbacks in him also. "And He delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; for that righteous

man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed * his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds. The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." In these verses the "just" and the "godly" are used as synonyms of the "perfect" and the "upright" of the text. And one sign of perfection in man is to be "vexed" with the filthy conversation of the wicked; yea, more, to be "tormented," "pained," because of their unlawful deeds. Vexation and torment arising from a consciousness of perfection.

In this Psalm the wicked and the perfect are balanced against each other, under different names almost in every verse; but however much the names vary, the characters underneath continue the same, working out their respective principles in their various courses in life. The "wicked" of the text are the same as the "evil-doers," "the workers of iniquity," and the "ungodly" of the preceding verses. There is no need to trace out the character of these people, for do they not work it out in the sight of all in their ungodly conversation and conduct? And yet, forsooth, they dream of heaven. But what sort of a heaven? Where is the heaven which is consonant with their taste? The heaven of the Bible is a heaven arising from perfection—moral, not immoral, perfection; have they those elements in them that would drink in happiness from such a state? All their delight consists in things which, according to the Apostle, disentitle and disqualify all who commit them to enter the kingdom of God. Every man manifests his character in his works,

* Welsh *poeni*, tormented; the same also in the original.

and thus fixes in this world his fate in the next. "God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption." The ungodly shall have a heavy harvest, yea, a harvest without a summer, and all the crop will be wormwood. "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in the past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God."

How can a man make everlasting bliss to himself out of such unclean and inflammable ingredients as the above? There is nothing in the nature of such things but material for never-ceasing woe. What true happiness can be extracted from ungodliness? Carnal pleasures, even in this life, are only the seeds of sorrows, germs whose growth and development are for ever intertwined and entangled with a man's existence. Ungodliness—what is it? Whither its direction? Ah! the ungodly points nowhither but to himself; consequently he must find happiness within himself; but where there are the elements of happiness? Himself is the centre of all his meditations, of all his thoughts, of all his plans; his life he lives to himself; he nourishes his own heart, pleases his own will, does everything for his own sake. God is not in all his thoughts." For him and God there is no room in his mental world—he is a God to himself. He plays on all the chords of his lusts as

on the strings of a harp to make music for himself, so that as in a dance he may step to the sound thereof, step to his own eternal ruin.

I. Let us now contemplate the WICKED as set forth in the text. "I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree." (Welsh: I have seen the wicked strong, branching out like a green bay-tree.) Notwithstanding all the dangers, present and future, which beset ungodliness, yet a sense of complete security seems to possess the wicked.

1. He is strong in *health*. "I have seen the wicked strong—strong like a green bay-tree"—strong like a green bay-tree when it has well established itself in its native soil, throwing out its branches in all directions; standing, despite all the winds which blow upon it; standing strong, because its roots have struck deep down into the earth. "Thus I have seen the wicked, strong like a green bay-tree." Strong: of healthy appearance, robust development. Death has never been able to effect an entrance into his thoughts. Strong in his feelings, strong in his sensations, fearing no assault, suspecting no danger. "Strong; *yet* he passed away."

2. Strong in *riches*. "Spreading himself out like a green bay-tree," throwing forth his branches everywhither. His fields have cropped heavily; he has much goods laid up for many years; he has no need to seek help at any man's door. He is a gentleman of independent means a sense of independence filling his heart to the very brim. Pharaoh-like, he defies all authority, and contemptuously asks—"Who is the Lord?" Have you heard of any

one greater than me? Who is He? Where dwells He? Push forward; let us pursue and divide the spoil; than me there is none greater. But in the midst of the sea he found out that there was one mightier than the King of Egypt. "Let us flee from the face of Israel; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians."

3. Strong in *pride* and selfishness. Prosperity, honour, riches often engender a sense of self-sufficiency; and the man is in danger of forgetting everything, yea, himself in the bargain, and developing into a cruel oppressor. He deems himself invincible, and looks down with scorn upon others without a spark of genuine respect for any one save for his mighty self, never takes off his hat at the mention of any name except his own. Haman is a correct representative of this class—swollen with the wind of applause which he has so eagerly drunk in, intoxicated with the cup of honour held to his lips. "And when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zeresh his wife. And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and servants of the king. Haman said moreover, Yea, Esther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that she had prepared but myself; and to-morrow am I invited unto her also with the king." There for you might, honour, greatness, almost too much to bear—"spreading himself out like a green bay-tree." It is the same figure, the figure of a tree, tall and mighty, that is used to set forth the pride and greatness of the king of Babylon. "The tree that thou sawest, which

grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof unto all the earth; whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation: it is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong; for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominions unto the end of the earth." Yes, thou thoughtest, in the greatness of thy might and the splendour of thy magnificence, that thou wert immovable, recognising no power superior to thine own, saying in the pride of thy heart, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" "But while the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O King Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee." He also discovered that there was one greater than the king of Babylon. And as with him, so with all, notwithstanding our haughtiness and arrogance. Better therefore to submit in time to the high God. "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time." If you humble not yourselves now under His hand with a view to your subsequent exaltation, the time is fast approaching when *you must* be prostrated under His feet, to be exalted thereafter nevermore.

4. "Spreading himself out," says the text, his ramifications stretching forth in all directions. Ostentation; pompous, showy. Just as the great monarchs of the earth, when they make their appearance before the

public, compete with each other as to who shall be greatest. Behold the prancing steeds, harnessed in gold and silver; the chariots glittering with costly ornaments; and the whole procession arrayed in all the gorgeousness of colour—"spreading themselves out like green bay-trees." Or turn and inspect circles lower in the social world. See that man day and night on full stretch feeding the flesh—eating, drinking, revelling, "running to every excess of riot." "Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth, and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter." Now contrast this style of life with the example of Christ, or with the idea of the Bible concerning the celestial state. What affinity can be between a carnal life here and the future life yonder? "What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? and what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." How can a man who delights in all forms of corruption draw happiness from the elements which go to constitute heaven? Remember this—every man makes in this world his place in the world to come; like Judas, every one must go "to his own place," the place he has made and furnished for himself by his works in this life. Thou, whose place is never empty in the tavern, the playhouse, the ball, the hunt, thou art making for thyself a *hot* place in the world to come. An evil life here makes an evil eternity yonder. As you live,

so must you die, and be for ever. "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." There is no changing character outside of Christ, and no changing condition outside the horizon of time. Here only can you go through from death unto life, and be translated from the power of Satan to the kingdom of His dear Son.

5. We must follow the ungodly yet a little further—"till he pass away." Yes, we must follow him notwithstanding the gloom that closes in upon his path, till he plunge into darkness too thick for our eyes to penetrate. "I have seen the wicked—strong, and spreading himself out like a green bay-tree," visible from all the country round about; lifting up his head like a cedar, sturdy and tall, above all his compeers in wickedness; always riding the high horse in every concourse where ungodliness and cruelty meet. His branches were spreading out in all such scenes as these, offering them his patronage and protection; his head towering high like the cedar in every resort of iniquity. His voice louder, his activity greater, his zeal stronger, than of any of his associates, he pushed on to the front, took the lead in all sports and pastimes, threw everybody to the shade—"his branches spreading out like a green bay-tree." Thus you see that the man here described was a leader in ungodliness, both on account of the intrinsic energy of his nature and of all the advantages he enjoyed in virtue of sound health, abundant riches, and high social position.

But notwithstanding all this, I saw him afterwards with his head low enough under the stroke of One stronger than he; I heard him groan in his affliction, saying with Pharaoh to the people he formerly despised and oppressed—"Pray ye for me." The green bay-tree, strong, vigorous, throwing out its thick branches, now withering under the judgment of God. "Yet he passed away." Despite his greatness, his pomp, his wealth, his magnificence, his strength, his arrogance,—"he passed away, and, lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." "He passed away." Away? whither? Here he disappears in darkness, we lose his track. "He was not." What! Has he been annihilated? We cannot tell what has come of him—"he passed away." Look to the graveyard, a little of his history is to be found there—his birth, his age, and—yes, and—and what? Well, his burial. Yes, but what then? "Man dieth and wasteth away; and where is he?"

So far are we able to track the steps of the ungodly—to the edge of the grave; then he becomes lost in densest darkness! His history ends. We saw him strong and flourishing in yonder palace, living in pomp and vanity; we saw him afterwards in the hunt shouting lustily; we saw him afterwards in the hotel drinking spirits like water. But—"he passed away; and, lo, he was not." Dear me! "He passed away." Where to? To nothingness? The text says not a syllable about him but that he has left here, and his history ends. "He could not be found." Just as a constable follows a thief, hearing about him here and there, pursuing him from village to village, from parish to parish; but all of a sudden he

loses all traces of him; he cannot hear a syllable about him, and is obliged to turn back, with only the words—"he could not be found." Dear, dear, ask the people, what has become of him? You traced him to such and such a place, did you not? Yes, answers the policeman; but his history suddenly ended there as if he had been snatched into the clouds or hurled into the sea—"I sought him, but he could not be found." Thus the text; "I saw the wicked strong, spreading himself out like a green bay-tree; yet he passed away; and, lo, he was not." But perhaps thou wert not sufficiently diligent in seeking him. Yes, "I *sought* him, but he could not be found." He had made a renowned history to himself as a mighty hunter, a cruel master, a hard drinker, a gluttonous eater; he filled a great place in various societies which had sport and amusement for their object. "But—he passed away, and, lo, he was not." His history is come to an end.

A beautiful bay-tree was growing in the park in front of a gentleman's seat, a tree which had branched out so wonderfully, with its leaves ever green, that it commanded the admiration of all the wayfarers on the main road. But all of a sudden it withered, and was uprooted; its place was filled up, the green turf was set smoothly to hide the red earth. A man from the adjoining parish was one day passing, and observing a great change in the shrubs in front of the mansion, could not for the life of him divine the reason. He turns round and looks, and presently misses the handsome tree. Well, thinks he, where is the tree gone, the most beautiful of the lot? I will go and seek it. Here, yes, here it stood, I feel

sure; and yet there is no sign that a tree ever grew here, there is nothing to be seen but the green sod. "I sought it, but it could not be found." What was yesterday so grand is to-day without a history. So will vanish the memory of the ungodly. "The name of the wicked shall rot." "He passed away; and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found." Is the ungodly to be found at all, or has he sunk into nonentity? "Man dieth, and where is he?" The text leaves us in gloom that no eye can pierce, outer darkness, without the light of sun or moon or stars, simply saying—"He passed away, and he was not." His history terminates in the Valley of the Shadow.

But suppose we give another turn to try and find the ungodly, the man who the other day filled such a prominent place in society. The likeliest spots to find him in are the places where he delighted to resort to of old, the places where he was wont to be found. Suppose we go to his house? No; he is not there; other places had greater attraction to him than his home. I sought him there, but he could not be found. What about the White Lion? He used to spend much of his time there; have you been there? Yes, I looked into every room, but "he was not." But there was a great hunt yesterday; it was the "county meet," and he used to be an authority on all such matters; surely he was there? No; I looked narrowly for him, but he was not; "I sought him, but he could not be found." If he were anywhere on the mountain, I would be sure to hear his horn louder and clearer than all the horns. Well, well, where can he be? Suppose we explore the slopes of the "Dark Mountains;"

who knows but he may be found thereabouts? Heigho! Have you seen a man from our neighbourhood going this way on his journey; he was a great man in our country? A demon sends the answer back in shrill tones, "Yes, he passed this way the other week. I saw him traversing the land of the setting sun, and entering a black lowering cloud yonder; after that I saw him no more."

No tidings come out of perdition; the lost have no history. Accordingly we had better give up our inquiries and finish them with the text, "He passed away; and, lo, he was not; yea, I sought him, but he could not be found."

II. Now we must turn and examine the contrary character here described, the PERFECT, the UPRIGHT. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace."

I. Mark him in the *virtuousness* of his life. The perfect man points with his life as with his finger straight up to the Eternal Perfection. A "good man" he is called in verse 23rd; he is "ever merciful and lending" according to the 26th. "The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide" (verses 30 and 31). A close connection therefore obtains between his two lives, his present life and his future life. To live by faith here and to live by sight hereafter are very akin to each other. "For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face." But it is the same objects that we now contemplate through the glass that we shall hereafter behold face to face,

only the sight shall be clearer, corresponding to our higher state of existence. Thus close is the connection between the two states—the same objects, but greater clearness yonder.

2. Consider the perfect in his patience under *trials*. Throughout this Psalm, the perfect man possesses his soul in patience, the fierce attacks of the wicked upon him notwithstanding. "Ye have heard of the patience of Job;" ye have seen his meek submission to the Divine government of the world, ye have witnessed his faith in the beneficent purposes of the Divine Will. "Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die. But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What! shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips." His faith was strong in the Divine Wisdom, his confidence unwavering in the sanctifying tendencies of God's providence. "He knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."

3. Mark the perfect in the *secret* comfort he enjoys under his *trials*. He has his consolation—yes, *strong* consolation. Where? The natural man cannot understand it. He can see the good man's losses, trials, sicknesses. He can see enough of these to ask, What will become of him now, having lost all? The world has turned its back on him, the sheep and the cattle have died, the fig-tree is barren, nature frowns: poor fellow, his day has turned into night, Egyptian darkness has overtaken him. Under such circumstances, it is Egyptian darkness on the ungodly; only one sun shines upon him, and

when that sets, the darkness is such as may be felt. He knows not of the secret springs of comfort to which the perfect man has access in his troubles.

Jesus Christ had meat to eat of which even the disciples knew not. To do the will of His Father was to Him a spiritual aliment of which at the time they knew not the nature. He led a secret life, and consequently ate secret food, which was the secret of His strength under trials. Similarly the perfect man of the text possesses a life of which the world knows nothing; which life draws its sustenance, its comforts, and its strength from a source unknown to it. The perfect man may say with his Leader, "I have meat to eat which ye know not of." Yea, "we glory in tribulations also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope." "We rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ." The joy swallows up all discomforts in victory.

By looking over this Psalm, we again see that the comforts of the perfect man are a mystery to the wicked. His hope never dies out even in the densest darkness. "Trust in the Lord, and do good; so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed." "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass." "He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday." "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for Him." "They shall not be ashamed in the evil time; and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied." But there—that is enough touching the secret springs of his comforts. His faith, as you see, receives directly from the fulness of

God in Christ, so that nothing external can harm him. Let us therefore comfort ourselves in the Lord; this comfort will flow back to the source whence it came, and will swallow on its way many a brook, till at last it plunges into the deep crystal water of pure peace. "He shall enter into peace."

4. Mark the perfect, behold the upright in his *departure* from this life. "For the end of that man is peace." True religion improves towards the end, even as pure gold brightens in circulation. It ends better than it begins. Many a man has commenced life full of promise, but proceeded from good to bad, from bad to worse, defiling himself with impurity, and dying in impenitence. The end of that man is worse than his beginning: going from a sense of peace and security to the rush and stress of the storm, to the slippery places of eternity, sliding lower and lower down the slopes of perdition. There—he is lost. "I sought him, but he could not be found." "The evil-doers shall be cut down like the grass." "For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be." Aha, this *is* perdition! Not to be found! Gone away! History terminating over the bottomless pit, where darkness covers the face of the deep!

But "mark the perfect man, behold the upright." He also draws towards the end; he goes down the valley, meets the king of terrors at the foot of the "Dark Mountains." Oh, marvellous sight! He is an old man, weak and tottering, with grey hairs and bent back, having borne the cold and heat of many a day. Poor

man! he is likely to be lost in the valley and become a prey to the king of terrors; he will never be heard of again! Oh yes, mark him, behold him, follow him with the eye; he is drawing towards the close, it is true, but he will not be lost; it is growing light—lighter the deeper he goes. "Christ shall give thee light." "Whosoever followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." Pity him not; though he has weathered many a tempest, it is growing still towards the evening. "The end of that man is peace." From the storm to the calm! "He will enter into peace." "They shall rest from their works, every one who has walked in the integrity of his heart."

It is worth while to see a Christian dying, to behold the sun of life setting and the Sun of Righteousness rising, bringing in its train an eternal day. The glory of the setting sun and the glory of the rising sun meeting the same moment in the same quarter of the sky!

5. "Mark the perfect, behold the upright" once more—to see him entering on his *eternal state*. Light springs up in the darkness. See the portals of the eternal dawn opening to allow him to enter to the "inheritance of the saints in light;" hearken to his departing cry, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

If the religion of the Bible lead to and produce such an end, is it not worth our while to seek it? Is it not worth our while to possess it? The light of the gospel of Jesus Christ paints with beauty even the grim face of death; it adorns with rich gold the fringes of the dense clouds which hang over the "end," darkening

all the horizon of this life. "The end of that man is peace."

Does his history conclude here? No; "in the evening there is light"—light enough to read the small print of death, and to see that the history is to be continued on the other side of the page. Where then is the upright man? The old darkness has covered the valley; the shadows of death are as usual without order; but the aged Christian has gone through somewhere. Where will he be found? Oh, he will be found with the same things as here, only in a higher state of perfection. Behold, the heavens are opened, and he is entered: he is not lost in the swellings of Jordan. He is still to be found. Look towards Mount Sion: the innumerable company of angels have ceased playing their harps to gaze at the aged pilgrim in his change of raiment—raiment "exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth could white them," climbing up the brow of the hill to join them; and yonder another innumerable company of the spirits of just men made perfect, as they see him, give a shout of victory to welcome him to the abodes of bliss.

Mark the perfect men of the past, behold the upright characters of bygone ages, observe those who have slept in Jesus—they are not lost, they will have an honourable history world without end. "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him," and show them publicly in the day of the revelation of Jesus Christ. The people of the old dispensation, because of the darkness of the times, could not see much farther than the grave; they stood on the brink thereof, asking—"The fathers, where

are they?" They felt as if they had been lost. But no; they were not lost, only "under seal" "unto the day of redemption." The body of Moses and the body of Elijah were much sought for, but they could not be found. But on the Mount of Transfiguration they are "found." If Peter had asked them, Where have you both been hiding all these ages, hiding so that you could not be found? No doubt the answer would have been, "Under seal until the redemption of the purchased possession." John the Divine saw thousands and thousands of the Jews "under seal." "And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel." "After this, he beheld, and, lo, a great multitude which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God, which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb." The fathers are all alive and well: "whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation."

**STRENGTH OF SOUL MADE PERFECT BY
HOPE IN GOD.**

BY THE REV. W. HOWELLS, TREVECCA.

"They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run, and not be weary ; and they shall walk, and not faint."—ISA. xl. 31.

HOPEFULNESS, as consisting in the expectation of future good, and as excluding the fear of future evil, acts an important part in the conduct of life and the formation of character. The despondent are unhappy and weak, and they shrink from effort ; but the hopeful are joyous and strong, and they delight to put forth their strength in action. The inertness of the despondent continually deepens their despondency, increases their weakness, and aggravates their misery. But hope feeds upon every act to which it prompts, and it grows thereby. By its reaction it adds without ceasing to the permanent force of the characters of those who are moved by it, while it makes their happiness to abound more and more.

There are various kinds of hopefulness, which differ greatly in their nature and their effects. The nature of each man's hopes will be in accordance with his ruling desires, and the amount of his hopefulness will depend

on that to which he trusts for the fulfilment of his desires. One man's desires, and therefore his hopes, will go forth in the direction of the pleasures of sense. What has he to trust in for the continuance of the hope that these desires shall be gratified? If he is given to the coarser pleasures, his hopes must rest chiefly on the probable continuance of health and vigour of body. But, for the most part, these exhaustive pleasures rapidly fret away that on which they depend. Health, hope, and desire pass quickly away together, and a loaded table becomes an object of revulsion. If, however, his desires are set on the more refined pleasures of sense, such as the enjoyment of works of art, his hopes depend on the retention of the delicate sensibility of the organs by which he receives his impressions. But in time the eye becomes dim, and the subtle beauties of a fine painting cannot be seen; the ear becomes dull, and the sweetest music charms no more. When, again, we think of those whose pleasures are more purely intellectual, we know that an enfeebled memory puts an effectual check on the acquisition of knowledge, and that the general decline of mental power brings to an end the exercise of it in the spheres where it was once a joy to display it. Fame based on past efforts is a poor compensation for the loss of the power of acquisition and production which might avail for the future, for hope ever looks onward or dies. To all who thus limit their desires and hopes, the years draw nigh when they shall say, they have no pleasure in them.

But perhaps the most cherished of all earthly desires and hopes are those which are awakened by the social

affections, especially the domestic affections. These are worthy of being cherished, for when they are fulfilled by words and acts of love, they bring the purest and sweetest joy this poor world can afford. But when the frail natural tie is their chief support, are the hopes always fulfilled? Do not ungrateful and undutiful sons and daughters often inflict wounds which reach to the heart's very core? Then death comes and snaps the tie. On one day a loving and dutiful son or daughter is lost. The flower fadeth. On another day a father looks down in blank despair into the grave of a wicked son, and echoes David's plaint: "My son, my son! would God I had died for thee, my son, my son!" What pang so sharp to the natural heart as that which follows the vanishing of a parent's hopes!

The slight and shifting nature of the foundations on which worldly hopes are built make it evident that they can do but little towards giving abiding and progressive strength to character, while frequent failures and disappointments depress and enfeeble. Let us therefore pass, moved by a healthful sadness, from the narrow circle in which we have for a short time lingered, and let us see what there is in reserve for us in the large world into which Isaiah is prepared to conduct us.

We are at once made aware of its vastness, to the expanding and refreshing of our spirits, for we are brought face to face with God in all the majesty of His perfections: the infinite Greatness, to which the nations are as the small dust of the balance, yea, less than nothing and vanity; the strong Hand, which weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, and spreadeth out

the heavens as a tent to dwell in; the unsearchable Understanding, which takes counsel with none and receives instruction from none; the all-governing Righteousness, which summons a succession of nations to its bar to receive their doom, and, in particular, charges one nation, God's own children, with forsaking Him and rebelling against Him, and then condemns them to a long captivity in a distant land; the boundless and provident Mercy, which prepares a comforting message in readiness for the season of utter despondency, weakness, and misery, inviting them to wait on Him once more, in order to the renewal of their spiritual strength and their speedy restoration to their own land.

This large world, the spiritual, into which Isaiah has ushered us, includes all worlds, for it is as limitless as its Ruler. We all therefore belong to it, in one sense or another, and cannot pass out of it. If we are not at peace with Him who is supreme in it, we wander about aimlessly and dejectedly, as in an extended prison. But if we seek His favour, by waiting upon Him in faith, it becomes one great, eternal, and happy home. From its boundless resources our largest desires are satisfied, and our hope that they will be met for eternity is founded on what God has said He is to us in His dear Son. We are thus inspired with an undying spiritual vigour which avails for all the duties, temptations, and trials of life, and for the encounter with death.

I. The hopes that are based on faith in God give strength enough to approach Him.

This is the highest of all exercises of spiritual strength,

and effectually prepares for all the rest. This is a mounting up on wings, as compared with which the rest are but running and walking. When an angel draws near to God for close communion, all his powers of thought, affection, and desire must be at their utmost stretch, though he is unencumbered by sin. Who then shall give wings to a heavy-laden sinner, strong enough to sustain him in his upward flight? We have not far to search for the answer.

1. He receives strength to confess his sins to the God of truth from the hope of pardon founded on God's merciful promise. The God who is light, that is, personal truth, demands truth in the inward parts when we approach Him, otherwise there can be no fellowship. How strong is that lover of truth who can go and speak it against himself in the ear of the Searcher of hearts! The speaking of lies is always a sign of weakness. We lie to men because we are afraid of them. We deceive ourselves because we are afraid to be honest to ourselves. He that doeth evil against God, hateth the light which God is, and does his best to hide from God, moved by the weakness of spiritual cowardice. To depart from God in sin—what is it? It is to shut our eyes and let ourselves sink into ever-deepening darkness: a course of dreadful fascination for the spiritually weak, because it is so easy. But he who is moved to cherish and display repentance towards God; who lays bare before the gaze of Heaven his wicked life, his wicked heart, and his ill-desert—he is made strong enough to mount up; and while he toils and weeps, the angels look on and sing.

Whence is this power derived? Assuredly from Him

whom God hath "exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins." The frequency with which these two great blessings of repentance and forgiveness are spoken of in the closest connection in the New Testament clearly shows the intimacy of the practical relation between them. "If we confess our sins," God "is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Who but the repentant one values forgiveness? and who will have strength enough truly to exercise godly sorrow unless he is assured of forgiveness? It was the hope of partaking of the bread enough and to spare which moved the prodigal to say, "I will arise and go to my father." Before he began his confession, his father kissed him, lest the making of the confession should break his heart. When David said unto Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord," the prophet saw the gloom gathering on the face of the guilty king, and, to save him from utter despair, at once said unto him, "The Lord also hath put away thy sin." The hope thus awakened strengthened him to sorrow on, until the depth of his grief urged him to go and unburden himself before the All-holy and All-merciful. But before he ventured to speak of the sin which was ever before him, he moistened his parched tongue and cooled his burning heart with a large draught from the fount of mercy: "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy loving-kindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Then could he see the forgiving Father standing at the edge of the slough of despond, ready to help him out,

2. Hope and strength rapidly grow when faith clearly sees and steadfastly rests on the firm ground of forgiveness in the death of Christ. The deluding fancy that forgiveness is a blessing gratuitously bestowed on us by God in the mere exercise of His loving will, may slightly allay our fears for a season, but cannot call into existence that strong hope which shall strike its roots into the depths of our moral nature, that is, our conscience. The thoroughly quickened conscience will ask, and all the more loudly when the pleasant word "forgiveness" is ringing in its ears—Is not He who forgives sin a righteous God? Is not His righteousness His all-regulating attribute? Are not righteousness and judgment the habitation (or pillars) of His throne? Must not I go to meet Him as a righteous God, or will He leave His throne and cast away His sceptre in order that He may come to meet me? "No, no," it may be answered, "we must approach Him as the righteous One, repentant for our sins." Of course we must; but what is repentance at the best but a feeble and imperfect acknowledgment of God's righteousness, that He may be justified when He speaks, and be clear when He judges? The words "righteous" and "just," when used about God, must surely mean, unless they are violently wrested, that He acts judicially in dealing with sinners. When He forgives, He justifies. Is a sinner's sorrow a sufficient ground of legal acquittal? Nay; it is a deceptive quicksand, which if trusted in will swallow up the soul with all its hopes.

But the throne is accessible for the guiltiest, with his sins and the justice of God kept distinctly in view, through

Him "whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." The hope thus inspired expels all fear and gives him the strength of "boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; to draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having his heart sprinkled from an evil conscience." The throne, thus approached, becomes the throne of grace, with the tables of the magnified and honoured law beneath it, where mercy may be obtained in accordance with perfect righteousness. What a mounting up is this! which places the believing sinner verily by the side of the great living Propitiation, who is on the right hand of the Majesty on high, who also "is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them." The higher we rise the more do we see all things from God's point of view, and we now ask, Where is that which appeared to us, when we were far below, such a mighty, burdensome mass—where is the guilt of sin? We may ask long and ask in vain, for we get from here a clear view of the cross, at which the Pilgrim lost his burden; and no wonder, for on it our great High Priest bore "the sins of many," and put them away "by the sacrifice of Himself." Here faith boldly asks, "Who is he that condemneth?" and as boldly answers, "It is Christ that died." Here too hope looks on, beyond the present life, beyond the grave, beyond the judgment-day, and as far as she can pry into eternity, and speaks the challenge that befits her

"Who shall separate from the love of Christ?" And here, surely, all invigorated Christian hearts are prepared to exclaim,—In all things that henceforth may afflict or oppose, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

3. The justified believer derives strength to advance to closest fellowship with God from the hope that he may meet Him in likeness of character.

He learns in due time that the earlier stages, important as they are in themselves, are of highest value as preparatory for that which we have now to consider. He has had strength to move in penitence towards the God of truth, freed from fear by the promise of pardon. He has been enabled to approach the righteous God with confidence, as a justified man, through faith in the atoning blood of Christ. The further he advances the more are all the moral perfections of God unfolded before him. He is awed, but he is also attracted. He already stands on high vantage-ground, for he is reconciled to God; but he feels that God's grace has brought him to it, in order to further progress. He sees that some measure of likeness to his God in character is necessary as a fitness for unreserved, happy, and continued communion. His desires are enlarged, and he prays for a clean heart because his God is holy, for a loving heart because God is love. Upward, still upward, he wishes to pass. But what hopes will strengthen him for the higher flight?

First, and chiefly, the hopes that are based on his faith in the fact that as a justified man there is a living union between him and Christ. To use the language of

Scripture, he is "in Christ" and Christ lives in him. The trusting one and the trusted One possess each other as dwelling in each other. But let us not attempt the bold task of showing all that is meant by the pregnant phrase, "in Christ." It is enough for us to know a little about the blessed consequences which flow from the great fact it embodies.

"God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." Jesus is the inexhaustible source of life for men, for the life is eternal. But how may we hope that it will become ours? "Of Him," that is, of God, "are ye," that is, have your spiritual existence, "in Christ Jesus." The believer passes from death unto life by entrance into its Divine Source. When he approached his God as a sorrowing penitent, Christ was his wisdom, instructing him about himself and his God. He was then in Him that is true, who gave him an understanding. When he drew near with boldness, possessed of the righteousness which is by faith, he was "made the righteousness of God in" Christ. And now, when he desires to become Godlike in character, his hopes are fixed on Christ as his "sanctification," in whom he is a new creature. Shall these hopes be disappointed? This is much the same as to ask, Shall "the Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope," disappoint him?

These hopes are confirmed and strengthened when he lays firm hold of the fact that the life from Christ is unceasingly communicated by the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Christ. Between the believer and the Lord Jesus the Spirit is the living and enduring link, insomuch that as Christ dwells in the believer's heart by faith, so

also does the Spirit make him his living temple. Born of God and in God's image, through the Spirit, he becomes thereafter the Spirit's nursling, over whom he broods with a love equal to that of Calvary, and puts forth, in perfecting the believer's character, the power and skill which formed and endowed the human nature of the Saviour Himself. He gradually but surely advances the Christian in holiness, by enabling him with open face to behold as in a glass the glory of the Lord, thereby changing him into the same image from glory to glory. Thus is he fitted for more and more rapid progress Godward. He sees more and more clearly that he was redeemed in order that he might receive the adoption of a son. The Spirit of the Divine Son is sent forth into his heart awakening a kindred sense of sonship. His wings beat with a bolder and stronger stroke than ever, and he presents himself before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ with a high and pure joy that fills his soul, "crying, Abba, Father."

Higher than this it is not given to man to pass in the present state, and there is but one short flight between it and heaven. But some anxious Christian may be moved to ask, "Wilt thou, O Saviour, at any time let go the soul that trusts in thee?" And Christ will reply, "I give thee eternal life, and thou shalt never perish." And again he may ask, "Wilt Thou, O Father, ever abandon Thine own child?" and the Father will reply, "As my adopted son I have made thee My heir and a joint-heir with My only-begotten Son. To disinherit thee I must also disinherit Him." One more question, "Wilt thou, Almighty Spirit, leave incomplete

Thine own creation in me?" And the Spirit will reply, "The good work I have begun in thee I will perform until the day of Jesus Christ, when I will present the Lamb's wife to her Husband in the beauty of perfect holiness." Thus does the God of hope, in His Word, seek to remove every vestige of uncertainty as to the believer's future, and "to fill him with all joy and peace in believing, that he may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Who can measure the unfailing strength which inspires the Christian when he feels that he is safe, safe, safe in the threefold grasp of the Triune God?

II. The hopes that are based on faith give strength to live for God.

If we take the running of the text to mean the rendering of active public service to God, and the walking to mean steadfast advance in character, the Christian requires the strength needed for both in the approach to God. He comes down from the mount made ready, like Moses, for work in the camp at large, or in the retirement of his tent. In so far as the spiritual life is one, it is a life in God: it is the life of the repentant, believing, and loving son in his Father's bosom. "It is hid," that is, has its high source, "with Christ, in God." The energy of this life manifests itself in various ways. It puts forth its utmost strength in rising towards its source, when the Christian enters into fellowship with the Father and the Son. When it flows down, so to speak, into the Christian's heart, enabling him to grow in grace, or to enter on a course of social action for Christ, it comes with a

divine impetus which, in some cases, makes it resemble the rush of a mountain torrent, as in Paul, Luther, Whitefield and Wesley, and, in the case of the lowliest believer, like a noiseless, steady stream which nothing can stop or even retard very long.

1. The Christian makes a hopeful start in his course of service when he clearly realises the spiritual security of his own position. All fear dismissed with regard to himself, heart, head, and hands are free and strong for further work in himself or towards others. To see distinctly "the grace wherein he stands" is in effect to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Being "reconciled to God by the death of His Son," he is all the more sure of final salvation "by His life." Having his conscience purged from dead works by the blood of Christ, he enters with a lightened heart on the service of the living God. Assured by the promise and oath of the God who cannot lie that the refuge to which he has fled is impregnable, he is fully prepared to give himself without distraction to the tasks assigned to him, knowing that his hope will grow while he works, and his strength too, even to the end.

2. All the motives which the gospel presents before him feed his hopefulness and increase his working power. "I can do all things," said Paul, "through Christ which strengtheneth me." How torpid that soul must be which can resist the appeals made by the Lord Jesus to the whole of our moral nature! But Paul responded heartily to every one of them; therefore he was conscious of the possession of power enough to carry on the conflict with sin in himself, to build up the faith of the

churches, to attempt the conversion of the world to Christ, and, in doing so, to assault the very gates of hell.

We have the Saviour's appeal to the *conscience* in the words—"Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price." When the magnitude of the price is considered, what soul with a spark of spiritual honesty will not hasten to admit the just claim, and to make all the acknowledgment possible by giving up, without reserve, body and spirit to the service of their rightful owner? But hope steps in, to help the action of conscience, with the assurance that none can pluck out of the Redeemer's hand the purchase of His precious blood.

Our deepest *affections* are stirred when we are told that the purchase was made in love. A price of boundless value was freely paid by boundless love. Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. We love Him because He first loved us, and then cheerfully say—"The love of Christ constraineth us, not to live henceforth unto ourselves, but unto Him which died for us." But the impulse to action which love infuses is made stronger and steadier by the pleasant outlook thus afforded: "hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." The Christian loves on and hopes on and works on, because he knows that his love to Christ is the Spirit's seal on his heart that he is God's own child for ever, and is also the earnest the Father has given him of his future inheritance.

Once more, the Christian is prompted to strenuous and persevering action by the appeal made to his *desires*.

The highest point in his destiny is to be conformed to the image of the Son of God. What Paul aimed at above all things was to form Christ in the hearts of believers. Accordingly, the great all-embracing desire of the Christian is to attain to likeness to Christ. May he entertain the hope that this desire shall be satisfied? Let the Apostle John answer: "Now are we the sons of God," and "when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

(1.) Thus moved, the believer strives, above all things and in all things, after perfect likeness to his Saviour in personal character. He resolutely engages in the arduous and often painful task of working out his "own salvation with fear and trembling," knowing that "it is God which worketh in him to will and to do of His good pleasure." Strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man, he puts off the corrupt old man and puts on the holy new man. In the daily struggle with the old man, he learns to hate it as the exact opposite of Christ, and this hatred gives rise to a passion of holy revenge, so that as sin crucified Jesus, the Christian crucifies the old man. The death it thus dies is slow but sure, and the crucified looks hopefully on to the time when the hated thing he has crucified will bow its head and give up the ghost. Thus he acts for God towards Himself.

(2.) Keeping this high mark ever in view, he becomes strong enough to regulate by it all his social action. His eye being single, his whole body is full of light. In the most private sphere he will put on Christ by the

practice of meekness, humility, purity, and charity. If called upon to act a public part, he will seek to bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, that thus, while serving the Master, his own character may continually grow. He will escape the dangers incident to his position by unceasing watchfulness against sin and a harder struggling with it. He will free himself more and more from the ensnaring weaknesses of pride, vanity, personal ambition, and personal jealousies. He will become more and more deaf to the flatteries and applause of the weak ones around him, the deafness being due to the value he sets on a deep sense within him of the approval of his Lord. He will not be regardless of the opinions of men; but at the same time will be careful to commend himself to their consciences by the elevation and purity of his character rather than seek to win their admiration by the parade of his gifts; for he will know that all outward actions, however imposing, unless animated by the desire to glorify Christ and to follow him, will be at the best but a noisome carcase. He will therefore set lightly by the fading laurels which men would place on his brow, and keep always before his eyes the evergreen chaplet with which, in the event, his Lord will crown him.

(3.) He also regards all the incidents of his outward history in their relation to his eternal future, and glorifies God by steadfastly acting accordingly. His largeness and clearness of view give corresponding elevation and decision to his character. He looks at things seen and temporal in the light of things unseen and eternal, and makes the short present life a means of

preparation for the life that is endless. As a citizen of heaven, his heart is there, and with a holy foresight he lays up as large a treasure as possible in his true home. He counts it all joy when he falls into divers trials. He courts the encounter with difficulties, because he longs to make trial of his strength and courage, and to increase them. He meets his joys with the resolve to uplift and refine them. Wealth makes him happy, because it gives him a chance of laying his hand upon it and saying, "Not mine, but Christ's, and I am but His steward." He thus transmutes the mammon of unrighteousness into the gold of heaven. In family life he seeks to transport his earthly home as near as he can to the gate of heaven, in order that he and his dear ones may often look in and aim at becoming co-heirs of the eternal inheritance. With cheerful patience he steps into the furnace of sorest affliction, with the Son of God at his side, knowing that the fire will consume nothing but the bonds which unite him too closely to the world and to sin. The waves of sorrow may drive hard against his bark, but they will also serve to tighten the chain which connects it with the anchor, and thus give him fresh assurance of the firmness of the ground into which he has cast it; while at the same time the flag he has fastened above will have its folds opened out by the stormy wind, displaying more fully the inscription upon it, "All things work together for good to them that love God." With calm courage and joy he will look forward to the passing away of the last earthly storm—the storm of death, and will see a rich-hued rainbow thrown upon its dark skirt by the clear shining of his soul's true Sun.

And what afterwards? "With the Lord" in soul immediately, in perfect holiness, perfect love, and perfect bliss; with the Lord, in due time, possessed of a body like unto that of his glorified Saviour; with the Lord, with Him for ever, in the entireness of his redeemed nature, and thus fitted for entering upon a course of endless growth in mind and knowledge and of unresting service.

Have we made the hope that is laid up in God our own? If not, some other hope will be cherished, for not to hope is not to live. But without God, without true hope. When He is not welcome to our thoughts, small, worldly, self-centred, and delusive hopes will spring up. What a contracting of the soul's range of vision thus takes place, and what a dwarfing and enfeebling of the soul itself must follow! This surely is the mere hewing of broken cisterns, while the fountain of living waters is close at hand. What these cisterns contain only provokes thirst instead of quenching it, for they hold no water; no water to satisfy the craving of the heart—no water, not a drop, for the conscience. Moreover, the outlook of these false hopes is terminated by a gravestone. When a lightning-flash occasionally shoots through the dark beyond, partly revealing its vastness, as at the grave of a friend, the fearful vision is forgotten as soon as possible. Oh what contradictions of all that appears reasonable thus present themselves! A feeble creature shunning his Almighty Maker and Sustainer! A helpless sinner turning away from the loving Saviour! An immortal man terror-struck by his own immortality, and persistently shutting out from his heart

his only hope! May God, of His great mercy, save us from this fateful blindness!

But those who have laid hold of this hope, however feebly, have the promise of divine help. He towards whom they seek to mount up, "giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might He increaseth strength." How interesting to the Father's compassionate heart must be the first weak efforts of His sinful child in the approach to Him! When he is yet a great way off the eye of yearning love sees him. While he is moving slowly and painfully on, and almost borne down by the sense of guilt, the Father runs to meet him with the speed of infinite mercy, and says to him, "Come now, and let us reason together. Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Thus are the clouds of despair chased away by the Father's breath, and thus is the sun of hope unveiled.

"GREAT FAITH."

BY THE REV. E. THOMAS, NEWPORT.

"Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith : be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."—MATT. xv. 28.

THERE were among the numerous followers of the Lord Jesus many that were incapable of sympathising with Him, and of comprehending the nature, bearing, and range of His teaching, as well as the great object of His work and life. They witnessed His miracles, listened to His utterances, and shared the gracious blessings which He so richly bestowed, and which so signally marked all the steps of His public ministry ; but after all, "they had not His Spirit, and were none of His." Being His enemies at heart, they advanced against Him from misunderstanding to misrepresentation, from displeasure and disappointment to hatred and persecution, and that notwithstanding the unparalleled goodness He showed them and the world, in word and deed, as "full of grace and truth."

But He was opposed and persecuted not only notwithstanding His goodness, but also on account and *because* of that goodness, as His enemies often by misrepresentation endeavoured to turn His good works into evil deeds. It was for His good works He was stoned

more than once, and it was in consequence of some words of wisdom and truth which He had spoken, or some merciful deed which He had performed, He found it necessary to "hide Himself" in order to "escape out of their hand." It was "by the Spirit of God" He cast out devils; but He was accused of doing so "by Beelzebub, the prince of the devils." Had He not cast out devils at all, this charge would never have been brought against Him; and so this "contradiction of sinners against Himself" He had to endure because "He went about doing good."

Many instances of this are recorded by the Evangelists, and we find one of them in the context. "Then came His disciples, and said unto Him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended after they heard this saying?" The saying in question which gave offence was the significant and important statement that it is what cometh out of a man's mouth, and not that which goeth into it, that defileth him. This statement involved a truth of such importance to all, that the men who heard Him utter it might be expected warmly to thank Him for revealing it to them. But more fully explained by what He added, it condemned the Pharisees who had attempted to condemn the disciples. The latter, by not washing their hands before eating bread, "transgressed the tradition of the elders:" this was true, plain to all, and easily proved. But it was equally true and evident that the accusers, by teaching children by false pretences, hypocritical excuses, and pious fraud, to evade the claim of their parents upon their sympathy and practical help in the feebleness of their old age, "transgressed the com-

mandments of God." Thus the self-constituted judges and censurers of others are themselves condemned as the greater transgressors, by words which tried their principles and weighed their actions. The truth which Christ made prominent, that men should always and above all things obey God, was of inestimable value to men of all nations and ages, but the teaching of it endangered His life where He was at the time. He must therefore seek shelter and safety elsewhere. The "coasts of Tyre and Sidon" would be as likely as any place to afford a safe retreat, where the party, all-powerful on the spot where the offence was given, would not be likely to give Him further trouble. To these coasts therefore Jesus went; but prudence dictated that His withdrawal should be kept as profound a secret as possible. His going to the spot must be kept as unknown as the spot itself is secluded. There would be no safety for Him if the public knew where He was sheltering, nor would He be safer there from the revengeful wrath of the Pharisees than where He was before; and for this reason He "would have no man know it." Possibly no man in the place He left did know it; but though safe in His selected retreat from enemies, He could not be entirely concealed; "for a certain woman," who needed His help, made known to others what she had discovered herself, that He had visited their locality. On her application to Him for relief, and the result, we shall now proceed to make the following remarks:—

I. In the first place we notice her earnest prayer for the blessing she sought.

Nor was it marked by earnestness only, but also and equally by directness, humility, and faith. She deeply felt the distress that enabled her to seek relief, knew the nature of the blessing she wanted, which was mercy, and firmly believed she should obtain it. There was in her real earnestness much asking, seeking, and knocking, while her faith secured to her by anticipation the longed-for receiving, finding, and opening. She attached no conditions whatever to her suit. There was in it no "if" as to His power or will, her own worthiness or unworthiness, the facilities or difficulties involved in the case, the fitness or unfitness of the present opportunity for her purpose, nor any other considerations favourable or unfavourable to the success of her appeal. It was mercy she needed, mercy she sought, as she felt and believed her seeking would result in finding. No conditions, probable results, or possibilities, were allowed to interfere with the singleness and the directness of her prayer for the mercy for which she cried. The definiteness of her prayer was the power of it; as is the case with respect to every other prayer. A short arrow (simple prayer) shot from a tight string, is more likely to hit the mark than a larger one shot from a slack string.

In all probability this Syrophenician had heard of Jesus as ever able and willing to relieve all sufferers and give rest to "all that laboured and were heavy laden," and who came to Him for help. The works He performed had already spread His fame as such; His ministry and presence shook the Jewish nation to its very centre; and His character as the bearer of all men's

burdens was widely known in "the regions beyond." "And His fame went throughout all Syria." "The people that sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up." Though this woman had long sat in that darkness, she too saw the great light which was now shining all around. He had been represented to her as the long-expected Messiah, the Messenger of mercy, the mighty Deliverer of the afflicted and oppressed; and it is clear from the reverent manner in which she addressed Him that she had formed an enlightened and high estimate of His character. He was to her both Lord and Son of David, divinely mighty and humanly sympathetic. In herself she was a defenceless victim of a power which she could not resist, and which had imposed a galling yoke upon her which it was her sad lot to bear as the mother of a helpless daughter, "grievously vexed with a devil." She was both a subject and a slave; but there stood before her one that was Lord of all powers, with absolute authority to speak the commands of His own will,—“Go,” “Come,” “Do,” and all and everything must obey. She had seen His shadow or likeness in the reports that had reached her of His fame; and when He Himself appeared she instantly recognised Him as the great Benefactor; and without delay or doubt, with joy and gratitude seized the opportunity, the first that had been given her, and probably the last that ever would be given her, to secure the much-needed blessing. When pressing her appeal she fully trusted in the sufficiency of His power and the known readiness of His will.

It seems that this woman of Canaan, when she came

to Jesus for the help on which she had set her heart, knew nothing of His "would have no man know it." To know that would certainly damp her ardour in urging her suit, prevent her crying after Him, or possibly coming to Him at all on that occasion. The disciples, knowing that He had come to the place for the very purpose, as far as they knew, of hiding Himself, felt uncomfortable and even annoyed at her loud cries, which made His arrival and presence known to all around. The cries of the woman are likely to defeat the object of the retreat, and make public what was intended to be kept a secret. This was what the disciples feared as directly frustrating the object of the journey. They clearly saw, as they thought, that the intended refuge was no hiding-place at all; and that nothing was gained as far as secrecy was concerned by leaving Judea for it. The crying after them gave them such uneasiness and discomposure, because they thought it crossed the plan of their Master, that they impatiently besought Him to "send her away," satisfy and silence her at once, that they might hear it no more. Happily for the petitioner, herself knew nothing of the difficulty the disciples felt, and it therefore gave her no trouble. Her faith knew neither too little nor too much. She clearly understood two things,—the distress she felt, and the mercy she sought,—herself and Jesus. Knowing that was enough and only enough; to go farther and know difficulties would hinder, but could not help. Faith is not the offspring of human wisdom on the one hand, nor of human folly on the other. As in the case before us, it is neither an ideal image of the mind nor a mere con-

ception of the intellect, but a power of the spirit of man that taketh the kingdom of heaven "by force," as this woman did.

"All through the wilderness
It is our strength and stay ;
Nor can we miss the heavenly road,
While it directs our way."

The Son of God had indeed manifested Himself to the people of Israel ; but they did not see His glory, though it appeared in the light of His mighty works and divine teaching. The great majority of them failed to find Him even when He lived and worked among them ; but the faith of this woman, though an alien within the borders of Tyre and Sidon, found Him when He was hiding. She was encouraged to come to Him by the fact that He had first come to her, and was at the time standing within the limits of her own land. Her faith, as an effect, was hers, and in her ; but the cause of it, grace and truth, was in Him. She follows because He leads ; and moves, as the earth around the sun, because He attracts. She took His character and history as His promise by anticipation to realise and give her desire. She only wanted Him to repeat Himself, and become to her what He had proved Himself to be to every other sufferer that had ever sought His merciful aid. While the showers were so copiously coming down, might a drop fall on her ?

"He could not be hid," though He wished it, and endeavoured to hide Himself. He could turn water into wine without the help of any power but His own, cleanse lepers by the touch of His hand, subdue stormy winds and angry waves into calm obedience, cast out devils and

raise the dead to life by the word of His mouth; but this one thing he could not do—hide Himself. He found it easy to do everything else that He set His hand to; but the sun while it is shining cannot be hid. Let His enemies, who would set Him aside, put Him out of sight, darken the light of His gospel and extinguish the burning glory of His name, remember that they can never succeed in doing what He could not do Himself,—retire out of the sight and the reach of such as feel their need of help and mercy. While He is near and may be found, faith will ever cry after Him, "Cast forth the devil and have mercy."

II. In the second place we notice the success of this earnest appeal.

The Son of God always rewarded the faith He evoked, and satisfied the expectations He excited. As usual, He did so in this case.

Such were the sentiments contained in this petition, and the manner in which it was urged, that we wonder not at its success. From the first (not knowing the special difficulty of the case) success was only what might be expected. The distressed woman pleads her case with all the persuasive eloquence of the deepest emotion and sense of misery. She implored the Master to pity her, as only a woman, in the most affecting relation possible even to the tender sex,—that of a mother, could intercede. The deepest and most tender chord in her heart vibrates in the broken accents of her voice, touched as it is by the finger of no ordinary trouble,—“her daughter was grievously vexed.” What can possibly

resist the force of such a prayer under such circumstances? She asks for mercy and for nothing else: to show mercy was ever His greatest delight, His supreme pleasure and joy. He was never known to bruise; but under all the circumstances of His life, recognised the fact that He was sent and anointed "to heal the broken-hearted." The case under our notice was one for which the anointing was intended, as it was one of nothing but need on the one hand, and of no merit on the other. And further, the Son of God had appeared to "destroy the works of the devil." It was His wont to "heal all that were oppressed of the devil." The devil expected nothing at the hand of the Christ but the destruction of his works, of his kingdom, and of himself. He recognised the Friend of man the first time he met Him on earth as his tormentor. Whatever others expected from Him, the power that bruised the heel of humanity expected nothing but the bruising of its own head, to be bound up no more. The more entirely and the sooner ALL the works of the devil are destroyed, the better. Unless this is done speedily in the present case, the devil will destroy a noble specimen of God's work,—the daughter so grievously vexed, &c. To cast him out and afford relief was the acknowledged and special work of the Son of God; and therefore the prayer which asks Him to perform it, must in all appearance succeed in securing a favourable answer.

But a barrier, after all, is opposed to the progress of the desired success. "But He answered her not a word!" This silence was significant. It was very strange. What could have been the reason of it? and what could it mean? He often complained that when He spoke to the

people of Israel, they as deaf men seemed not to hear Him, and refused to respond to His utterances; but now a Gentile woman speaks to Him, and He seems either unwilling to listen or unable to reply. No one but Himself knew why He was silent. His reply was indeed ready; but it was only such as would bitterly disappoint the expectant and hopeful petitioner; and for that reason He was reluctant to give it. He will not say "No," a word in which He has no pleasure on this occasion, till circumstances compel Him to break silence and bring the matter to a close in some way or other. He cannot say "Yes;" His commission to Israel only rendering to Him the delightful concession inconsistent with that commission. For these reasons He remained for a while, possibly a long while, silent. He could not say what He would and grant the blessing: He would not say what He could and refuse it; and that being the case He would say nothing. Hence the mysterious silence. The suspense caused by this silence made the disciples somewhat uneasy: it was probably irksome to them. They betrayed this feeling in coming forward to proffer their good offices in behalf of the woman. Sympathy with her and her case was not the only motive that prompted them to take this step. Their chief object was to silence her. Let Him speak, and then they thought there would be no more "crying after them." This even could be secured by simply granting the blessing she needed. This was a short and easy way of getting out of the difficulty in which they found themselves at the time. It would secure the secrecy which they knew the Master desired. Without delay they

boldly tell their Lord what they had decided among themselves as the best thing that could be done, which was to "send her away," but of course giving her the help for which she prayed. But they understood not what they said. If they had known more, they would have said less. This is not the only instance in which ignorance has presumed to solve problems and master difficulties that are often standing puzzles to knowledge. He tells them, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." The woman of Canaan is not one of these sheep. This ends the matter. They have not another word to speak respecting it. They give up the case in despair as irrecoverably lost.

To take the matter into her own hands and intercede for herself is now the only alternative left to the sorrowing mother. But is this step, if taken, likely to succeed? Twelve disciples have failed: will one woman prevail? Can weakness in her, single-handed in her effort, overcome the difficulty which has overcome the combined power of so many? She can base neither her effort nor her hope on probability and encouraging surroundings. All these are against *her*. But in the face of all she dares go against *them*; and in doing so takes care to begin by choosing the most necessary, the safest, and wisest method of pressing her suit. She came to the great Reliever herself, and pleaded her own case. Let all mediators stand aloof, and it will very soon be seen what her own personal application will accomplish. Friends, you need the blessings of the salvation which is in Christ Jesus; come to Him for them, seek them yourselves, and for yourselves. Do not leave your case

in the hands of others, however well disposed they may be towards you. The father and his returning prodigal son met when no one else was present; and blessed were the results secured with no friend helping either father or son. But though this woman pleads for herself, the first words the Saviour speaks to her are discouraging. "It is not meet," He says, "to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs."

That she was not of the house of Israel she knew before, as the Saviour described her condition by His reference to sheep and their shepherd. But still even in the light of that simile she was represented as a sheep of some other house. But the picture grows darker in the light of the simile which speaks of the contrasted conditions of children and dogs. The children's bread was not to be given to dogs; and a Greek woman was not to be granted one of the privileges intended for the children of Israel. This was the meaning; and it was not in any way to be objected to. In accepting it she gives her fullest assent, and says, "Truth, Lord." As truth she accepted unreservedly what He said. But it was a truth that seemed to blast her hope of success, and to forbid her to say another word in support of her plea. But the keen, piercing eye of her faith sees something even in this truth that she may press into her service and that at once. The logic of faith grasps the whole of the truth in question, not forgetting the crumbs. She contends that these are for dogs, as well as bread is for children. Bread is laid on the table, not for dogs but for children, and though dogs eat crumbs under the table, children have no reason to complain. There is

a giving of bread to children; but there is also an unintentional falling of crumbs for dogs. The petitioner applies this to her own case. She would not deprive the children of their loaf: but she would pick up a crumb that might happen to fall. Might something be done for her as by accident? The Great Physician was not at the time on a professional visit to the place; but He might perhaps turn aside for a few moments and attend to her case without much inconvenience. She was a strong defender of the children's right; but thought that dogs might, in another way, be attended to and fed, while those rights were preserved intact. This was the light in which she viewed and represented the case, and it was an admirable light. The Son of God yielded to the force of the argument she employed, and said unto her, "For this saying go thy way." It was one of the grandest sayings faith ever uttered, and He not only commended but also richly rewarded it as He dismissed the woman with the words, "O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt."

This Gentile woman was a princess in faith. We have also a Gentile man, the centurion, a prince in faith. Abraham and Sarah were the father and mother of the Jewish world in faith; let the Syrophenician woman and the centurion be the mother and father of the Gentile world in faith. Our Abraham and Sarah in that case would compare well with the Abraham and Sarah of the Jews.

III. In the third place we notice the result of the

appeal, and the reward of the remarkable faith in which it was urged.

The blessing prayed for was received, and the mother of the afflicted daughter for whom she had had so earnestly prayed, found that, according to the Master's declaration to every one that trusts in Him, it was "sufficient for her." In her request she had described the help she wanted as a mere morsel. The reference to dogs made by the Saviour in His reply to her request did not allow her to expect anything more than that as her portion. She did not seem herself to expect more than that as the measured help allotted to all in her rank and condition. But that which was small in appearance was great in reality, for there was in it the power of the Redeemer to deliver and bless. His pity, though compared to a crumb, or called by any other as insignificant name, would prove a complete remedy and a blessing so full as would leave nothing to be desired. Believing this, she asked for no more than mercy. "Have mercy on me" was the language of her distressed heart, believing that that mercy, once moved and exercised, would take a full survey of the case, and remove the dreadful evil. His compassion, a crumb or a word, was all she wanted to secure; for she knew He could bless as far as He could pity. His good will was salvation to her. A crumb, a smile, a word from Him spoken in mercy to us, and it will be well with us for evermore. A faith that placed such reliance on Him, did full justice to His power and compassion. To reward that confidence He made what was asked for, though in some sense a mere crumb, all-suf-

ficing in the result. But as the woman's faith was worthy of Him, so was the blessing worthy of the faith. A faith worthy of Him whose power was boundless; a result—the afflicted "daughter made whole from that very hour"—worthy of that faith. It was the woman's part to believe, and vitally important to her to believe enough; but it was His part to act, nor should He allow her to go further in believing than He in working. She did much in believing that all was well when He said, "Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt;" but He did much more, when He showed the mother His words in a real fact that appeared before her own eyes when she returned home. However far we go or can do in asking and thinking, "according to the power that worketh in us," He can go much further, and often does go much further, and do for us something "exceeding abundant" above all that. Sufficiency is the measure of grace promised and given to God's people as the support of their hope and faith, and this sufficient grace, enough (*digon*), is something better than either too little or too much. Too little would not realise the object and secure the end; while with more than sufficient something must be lost as wasted crumbs. Enough—neither too little nor too much—secures the end, while nothing is lost. It is not so much help from Christ, and no more, to be supplemented by our own resources if found inadequate, but a supply sufficient to meet all the exigencies of the case to be relieved, however deep and various its needs. The grace of Christ is given not by measure, but according to the needs of the petitioner. He takes to every one's case as it is, and repeats to all

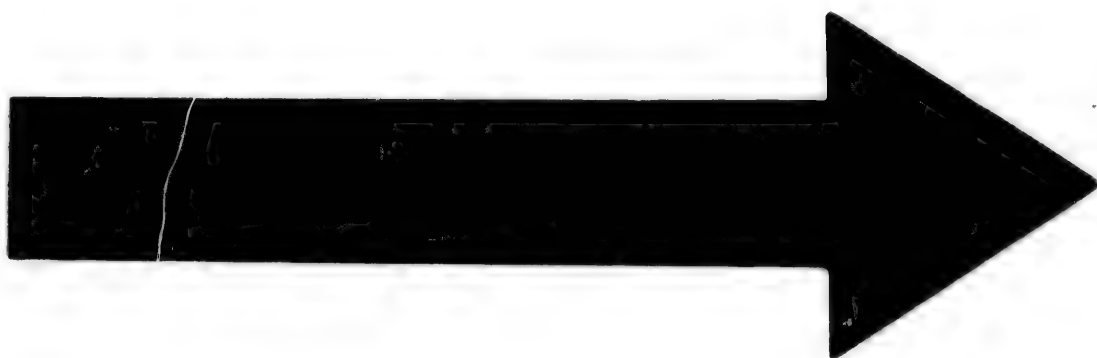
the old assurance, "My grace is sufficient for thee." The woman in the text evidently believed that if He took to the case, if she could only secure His compassion and good will, all the rest would follow, and the end would be well; and she was right. He was ever ready to realise all the expectations of trust in Him, and to meet in full all demands upon the boundless fund of His mercy and love.

Much may be urged, felt, and acknowledged as militating against many a case that prevails in obtaining the blessing at last. We have an instance of this in the case under notice. There was a great truth, so important and evident that it could not be set aside, overlooked or forgotten, testifying against its success. That truth was fully stated by Christ as an obstacle in His way even to entertain the question of helping on that occasion, as He was requested to do. This truth was the acknowledged maxim that it was "not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs." All this was against the woman; but it was true, and truth itself. What can she do with it? Will she deny it? Impossible. Nay; she frankly admits it, and says, "Truth, Lord." But is not the truth thus confessed fatal to her suit, and does it not conclude the case against her? Denied it would have been so; for neither wisdom nor mercy can do anything against truth. But as the truth in this case was confessed as divine and irresistible in its authority, faith and mercy opened a way by which truth was saved and the suppliant blessed. Dogs eat crumbs. To this the Saviour in effect answered, "Truth, woman;" for it was an everyday fact that dogs ate

crumbs as children ate bread. Thus truth was not dishonoured when the captive, oppressed sufferer was set at liberty. Truth, as we are sinners, is a power against our salvation; and mercy can do nothing for us which in any way militates against truth. But when we confess and submit to the truth which is against us, other truths befriend and save us. When the loaf fails, the crumb serves. The Pharisee in the Temple concealed from himself the fact that he was a sinner, which fact was the great truth in his case. He spread a cloak of external religious performances over that unwelcome fact, endeavouring to hide it from himself and from God, hoping thereby to be justified. That it might not appear that he was a sinner, he spoke of nothing but righteousness. But this was to seek justification at the expense of truth; while the publican, on the other hand, by confessing his sins, sought justification by the aid of truth. He first justified God and himself in acknowledging his unworthiness and need of mercy, and it was he, and "not the other man, that went down to his house justified." The woman in the text pleaded her case as if conscious that mercy was impossible at the expense of truth. Mercy ever stoops to lift the penitent that humbleth himself before the authority of truth. Let us not, when we come to God for the blessings of His salvation, forget or endeavour to set at nought the truth which stands against us; for it is only as we are reconciled to it mercy is reconciled to us. Mercy is ever consistent with truth. It is when we acknowledge the latter we attain the former. All the truths of salvation imply mercy as the truth of bread to children suggested.

The work of the Saviour in the instance under our notice would be often recalled and long remembered by the mother as well as by her daughter. It left its own impress of preciousness on the very time in which it was done. Our Evangelist gives prominence to this in recording it, "And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." He set His stamp, the Divine impress, on that hour, and it was revered ever after as specially His. And His was a happy hour. Times and circumstances leave their mark upon us; but He left His mark on the circumstances connected with and the time of His visit to the borders of Tyre and Sidon. The power that so "grievously vexed" the young victim had marked many a lingering, painful hour in the sad experience of the past, claiming them as its hours, and entirely under its own control. But at length the light of His hour dawned on the dark scene, and brought with it relief, health, strength, and joy. The mark He set upon it when He said, "Be it done unto thee even as thou wilt," singled it out as the firstborn of many succeeding hours, like it in the joy of their bliss, for the afflicted "was made whole from that very hour" for all the future hours of her life. The mid-day of the day in which Saul of Tarsus saw the glory and heard the voice of the Lord Jesus never died out of his memory; but the associations of it remained an ever-present, living power in his soul to the end of his life. The occurrence on the way near Damascus made that mid-day hour emphatically and in a most important sense his "Master's" hour. There are times and seasons in your own life and experience, so wonderful in their influence upon you, and

so blessed in their results, that they are to you seasons full of heaven, which leaves very plainly its impress upon them. One of the seasons is that in which you were brought to God, saved from your sins and unbeliefs, and your name enrolled in the Lamb's book of life. Was not that time His hour, and so full of His power and grace as henceforth to be recognised as His? The first day of the week is His day. He claims it as His, to be devoted to the uses and ends of His resurrection. The ensign by which that day is known is life and immortality,—the mark which He set upon it when He arose from the dead and abolished death. Let no unhallowed hand attempt to tear that mark away, and deprive the day of its sacred significance. And as the time Christ employs to bless becomes His, so do the souls He saves. He writes His "own name" upon them, and they will be known for ever as His.



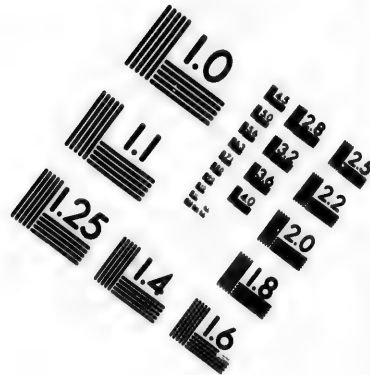
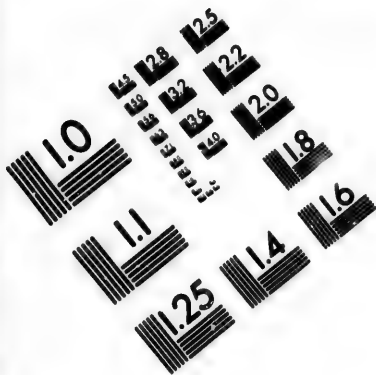
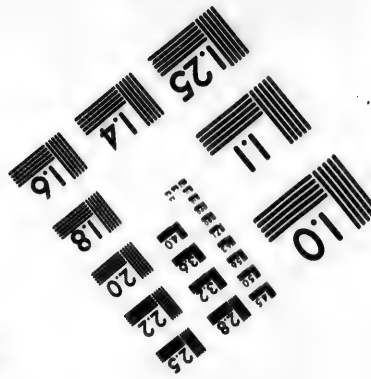
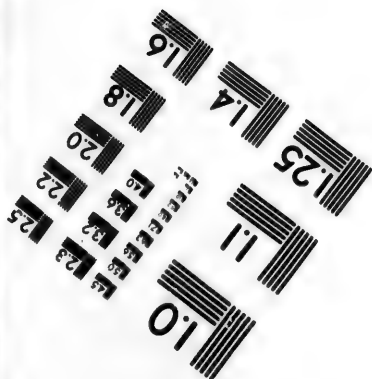
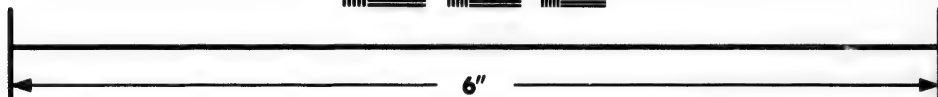
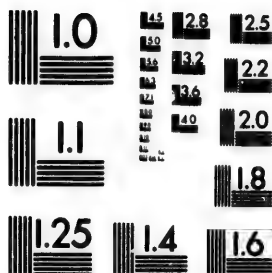


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CHRISTIANITY A FACT AND A POWER.

BY THE REV. GRIFFITH PARRY, ABERYSTWYTH.

"And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.

"Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."—1 JOHN iv. 14, 15.

THIS chapter consists of two parts, as it deals with Christianity in its two aspects of *Truth* and *Love*.

I. In the first six verses the Gospel is regarded as a system of divine *truth*. Tests are supplied for distinguishing true and false prophets—the spirit that is of God and the spirit of Antichrist—the spirit of truth and the spirit of error. We have here two tests. The teachers are to be known by their ministry and by their followers.

One distinguishing mark is their *doctrine*. The teachers of the truth, or the true ministers of the Gospel, are to be known by the subject-matter of their ministry, that which they proclaim or confess. The "present truth" of that age was the Incarnation. This was the touchstone of a true ministry. Gnosticism—that huge system of error which had developed itself by the latter end of the first century—denied the Incarnation, the fundamental fact of the Gospel. This was destructive of the entire Gospel fabric. Therefore, to announce or to deny

the Incarnation—to confess or to deny that Jesus is the Christ, or “that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh”—this it was that divided the religious teachers of the age into two classes, the true and the false: “Hereby know ye the spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of anti-christ whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (chap. iv. 2, 3).

They were to be known also by their *followers*. Even as truth and error divided religious teachers, the teachers also divided the hearers. Like attracted like. Those that were of the world, the world heard them—the world in the preacher drew after it the world in the hearers. On the other hand, they that were of God, those who knew God, heard them; the divine in the preacher attracted the divine in the hearers. “They are of the world, therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. We are of God, he that knoweth God heareth us: he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (chap. iv. 5, 6). Those that were of God and those that were of the world formed two opposite classes; the difference between them was marked and obvious: and the different attitudes of these two classes towards the respective teachers proved who taught the truth.

2. From the 7th verse to the end of the chapter Christianity is regarded as a principle of *love*. Love is the distinguishing principle of the Christian religion. As an external system, in its objective aspect, it is

truth; as an internal principle—in its subjective aspect, it is *love*. As truth, it addresses itself to the reason; as love, it controls the heart. The external truth once received realises itself as love within. Truth is converted into love. It is truth of such a character that the moment it is believed it of necessity begets love. It is truth concerning love, a revelation of the love of God towards the world; and as soon as it is believed it cannot fail to produce love towards God in return: "We love Him, *because* He first loved us" (chap. iv. 19). And after love has once entered the heart, God has come to dwell in that heart, because "God is love." The Spirit of God is the spirit of love. Therefore it is through love that the highest end of religion is answered—the healing of the breach which sin had made between man and God—the making of God and man *one*—He in us, and we in Him.

In accordance with the above explanation, we have here two signs of true religion—belief in the Incarnation and brotherly love. These are the two conditions of the divine indwelling—to believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, and to love one another. In other words, the two principal graces of the Gospel—faith and love: "faith in Christ Jesus and love towards all the saints." These are the two bonds of the union of the Church: faith unites all the members with the Head, and love unites all the members with each other.

In the two verses before the text, *brotherly love* is specified as a condition and a proof of our dwelling in God: "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and His love is per-

fectured in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit," ver. 12, 13. In the verses of the text, *belief in the Incarnation* is set forth as the condition or proof of the mutual indwelling of God and us, the one in the other, He in us and we in Him: "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

If it be asked, why does the apostle recur to this second mark, after he had treated it in the first portion of the chapter? the answer is: In the former part of the chapter the apostle lays down belief in the Incarnation as a proof of a true ministry; but here he adduces it as a proof of true religion. To believe that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not alone the note of true ministers, but of true believers also: "*Whosoever* shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

The text represents Christianity as a *fact* and as a *power*. In the 14th verse we have Christianity as a *fact*: "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world." In the 15th verse Christianity is presented as a *power*: "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." These, then, are the two subjects set before us in the text: *Christianity as an external fact in the history of the world, and Christianity as a spiritual power, or a source of permanent influence on the world.*

I. *Christianity is an external FACT in the history of the world*: "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

1. The condition of the world was desperate. Man through sin had destroyed himself. Nothing short of *salvation* would have met the case of man as a sinner.

This salvation of necessity had to come from God. In the providential arrangements which are so full of meaning in the world's history, humanity had been put upon its trial for thousands of years in the development of its own resources. And instead of development, what do we find but deterioration? Or rather there was a fearful concurrence of the two processes. Side by side with material and intellectual development there went on for ages a corresponding spiritual deterioration. As one side of our nature was rising, the other was sinking—sin thus ever exhibiting in its effects more and more its own monstrosity. Such was the power of corruption that every material, intellectual, and social advancement was perverted to be the instrument of greater wickedness, until at last, when artistic and literary beauty had reached its climax,—when human culture and political power had culminated in the Roman Empire,—there was seen a spectacle of moral degradation, a depth of corruption and misery such as the world had never witnessed. Society was rotten to its very core. Its disintegration was imminent. Like the woman in the Gospel, humanity, after trying all the physicians of nature, instead of being cured, had become worse and worse. The machinery had no self-adjusting power; it could not right itself. In the physical system the *vis medicatrix naturæ* is

invaluable, as without it the best efforts of the physician would be of no avail. But in the spiritual constitution there is no such self-restorative power. The power must come from without. The maker of the machinery alone can repair it. The comparison is too weak: it is not a matter of repairing, but of re-creating. He who created humanity at first is alone able to create it anew. The Author of life can alone quicken the dead. "Salvation is the Lord's." The sinner can destroy himself, but he cannot save himself. All his help is from God.

As salvation could have come only from God, so the order of the Divine nature made it a necessity that it should originate in the First Person of the Godhead—in God "the *Father*, of whom are all things." And the same Divine order rendered it necessary that it should be accomplished by the Second Person—God "the *Son*, through whom are all things." This is what took place: "the *Father* sent the *Son* to be the *Saviour of the world*."

2. This salvation was of necessity a *fact*. It was a great act. Thoughts and words would not have sufficed to save us; good wishes would not have availed us, without action. To speak would not have been enough. *To do* was essential. Redemption was a *work* of infinite greatness and difficulty. It is observable how often the verb "to make" occurs in the Gospels and Epistles. Our salvation throughout was one vast, unparalleled *making*. "The Word was *made* flesh;" "*made* of a woman;" "*made* under the law;" "*made* to be sin;" "*made* a curse for us." And this making *of* Him was a necessary condition of a great making *by* Him. After He had thus assumed our nature and become our surety, He

obeyed, suffered, and died for us in order to make atonement for sin, to "make reconciliation for iniquity," to "make peace through the blood of His cross." And this making *of* Him and *by* Him were both the conditions of an ultimate making *through* Him: "that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him," made "partakers of the Divine nature," made "children of God" and "heirs of eternal life."

Thus our redemption cost more than good wishes—more than words of sympathy. We are bought with "a price" of infinite worth. God's own Son had to shed His own blood to be a ransom for us: "the Church of God, which He purchased with His own blood." Nothing less than this stupendous price could have brought us salvation: "without shedding of blood is no remission." And we may remark, in answer to the superficial, sickly sentimentalism which in these days so often seeks to assail the doctrine of the Atonement under the guise of a jealous regard for the glory of the fatherhood and love of God—that the holiness and righteousness which made this infinite sacrifice necessary are the very pillars of the universe. They are the fundamental conditions of the well-being of all God's moral creation. The love that would ignore all that is *right* and just and pure is not worthy the name; it is not a principle but a sentiment—a contemptible weakness. It is the union of justice and love in the character of God and in the atoning death of Christ that makes both adorable. They illuminate each other with an ineffable glory. Justice glorifies Love; Love beautifies Justice.

God's thoughts were ever for our salvation. He felt

with divine intensity for our salvation from all eternity. But an eternity of thinking, although it was *God* that was thinking, an eternity of feeling, although it was *God* that was feeling, would not have wrought salvation for a single soul, unless the thoughts and feelings had been converted into acts. And it is this that we find in the history of the Man Christ Jesus—the eternal thoughts and feelings of the Godhead realised in glorious works.

Thus salvation is a series of acts constituting one glorious work—a series of unparalleled facts as links in a chain making one great fact, a chain of salvation for raising sinners from the depths of sin to the heights of holiness.

The glory of Christianity is *that it reveals salvation*; and the glory of salvation is that it is *a great fact*—a divine fact accomplished in human nature. This is its power and efficacy. It is a salvation, not in imagination, nor in theory, nor in purpose, nor in words, but in *fact*—in very deed. In spite of all the powers of darkness, it is a great *fact*. It exists, and will endure for ever. It cannot be explained away. No logic or sophistry can shake it. “Everlasting strength” belongs to it as to its Author. There is no truth in history to-day supported by such various and incontrovertible proofs as this: that God, about 1800 years ago, interposed supernaturally in the history of the world—that God in a special manner entered into the spiritual history of mankind, in a Person, an act, and a series of acts, that were unprecedented, in order to be the Saviour of the world. “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh.” “For when we were yet without

strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly." Christianity is a religion of facts—the most conspicuous in history. It can never be reasoned away.

The work of the gospel ministry is to *proclaim the facts of salvation*: "And we *have seen* and *do testify* that 'he Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world.'" The apostles had seen and had lived in close intercourse with the Saviour. They were eye-witnesses of the great facts of salvation—the life, the death, the resurrection and ascension of our Lord. Their work was to bear testimony to these facts: and our work, and that of our successors, is to continue to perpetuate the testimony, to hold up "the banner of salvation" to the end of time. Our business is not to argue or to philosophise, but to *testify*. "Christianity is not a religion of rites, therefore its ministers are not to be priests; it is not a religion of metaphysical dogmas, therefore its ministers are not to be philosophers: but it is a religion of facts, therefore its ministers are to be *preachers*." * Our business is to preach, to proclaim, to do the work of the King's messenger—to announce "that Christ Jesus has come to the world to save sinners;" that there is life for a sinner in His death; that the greatest sinners are welcome to come to Him to be for ever saved through Him. "And this is the record (or the *testimony*), that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son;" "And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world."

This is the grand purpose of churches, chapels, sermons, and Christian activity in all its forms—to hold up the

* Dr. Maclaren.

testimony concerning Christ—to announce to the world its life-message.

II. *Christianity is a SPIRITUAL POWER, or a source of permanent influence on the world.* "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

1. *The Incarnation of the Son of God was the indispensable condition of the reunion of man with God.* This is the highest greatness that any creature is ever capable of attaining—that God should "dwell in him, and he in God." This does not mean to be lost like a wavelet in the ocean of Godhead, as the Pantheist imagines, but to become *one* with God in the affinity of holiness and the fellowship of love, and yet to preserve for ever our personal individuality in the conscious enjoyment of that union.

This has been the professed object of every religion—to unite man with God. There is a deep spiritual instinct in humanity to which Augustine gave expression when he said, "that man has been formed for God, and that he can never be happy but in God." This was the great problem of the religions of the heathen world through the ages—how to restore the union between man and God.

But they all mistook the way. The religions of the world aimed at raising man to God through the exercise of moral virtues. But in order to accomplish this, something else had to be done first. Before man could be raised to God, God had to come down to man—yea, had to *become* man. The High and the Lofty One had

to come down to the depth in order to raise sinners and to unite them for ever with Himself.

It was this that was accomplished in the Incarnation. The Son of God became the Son of man, in order that the sons of men might be made the sons of God. He brought heaven down to earth in order to lay hold of earth to raise it up to heaven. "Now that He ascended, what is it but that He also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things" (Eph. iv. 9, 10). The very principle of salvation, the sole possibility of salvation, lies in these words—to ascend—"what is it but that he also descended first?" This is the condition of our salvation—to *descend first*. It would have been for ever impossible to raise sinners from the depths had not the Saviour "descended first" to the depths. Man could not have been saved by *ascending*—by the mere development of his natural powers. Our salvation has been wrought by a *descent* of unparalleled magnitude—the Eternal God descending from the infinite heights, and making His abode with man by *becoming* man! *Descent* is the ground of *ascension*. Thus it was for Christ Himself, thus it is for us through Him.

2. It follows that *the Incarnation and death of the Son of God form the spiritual power that is to create the world anew—the moral lever for raising humanity to God.*

The Gospel concerning Christ and His work "is the power of God unto salvation." This is the great *power* that must be brought to bear upon human nature to regenerate it, to create the new heavens and the new

earth, to restore mankind to holiness and happiness. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8).

The efficacy of a belief in the Incarnation of the Son of God, with all it involves, is shown in the text in a strong light, by making such a belief to be the condition of the highest spiritual result: "God dwelleth in him, and he in God."

If we would become one with God,—and what higher glory or felicity is conceivable?—let us ever remember that *Christ* in His obedience and atoning death is the medium. He is "the Way;" "no one cometh to the Father but through Him." If we would be *godly*—at peace with God, renewed to the image of God, living in close communion with God—this is the secret, to believe that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners, that He lived and died in our stead; to have fellowship with Him by faith, and by faith and love to draw the virtues of His death to our spirits. This is the interpretation given by some of that great verse in the 2nd Epistle of Timothy: "And without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh." The doctrine of the Incarnation is the great mystery of godliness as an objective system of truth. It is the central truth. But it is equally doubtless that a vigorous practical belief in that doctrine is the great mystery or *secret* of godliness as a subjective principle of holiness. If we see a Christian of extraordinary attainments in godliness, we may be sure that this is the secret of his strength—his thoughts and affections revolve constantly around this great centre, "God manifest in the flesh;" he

abides by faith and love in Christ, and thereby God dwells in him, and he in God. This is the "*secret* of godliness."

3. Hence *the facts of our redemption accomplished in Palestine 1800 years ago remain in the world yet, as great spiritual forces operating on the souls of men to raise them to God.* Every particle of spirituality, of holiness or godliness, to be found in the world to-day, is the fruit of the Incarnation and Atonement of the Son of God. What do we see in the holy conduct of godly men throughout the world, in their heavenly conversation? What do we see in the Christian graces and activity of the Church? It is the fruit of the "*grain of wheat*" that died—the spiritual efficacies of the death of the Cross developing themselves in all the forms of the Christian life.

We conclude with two remarks of practical application:—

1. Let us *appreciate* the Gospel above all things. This is the purpose of the Gospel and its ordinances—to perpetuate the Incarnation and the Atonement. To make the coming of Christ in the flesh, the death of the Cross, the facts of our salvation—to make them ever-present realities before the eyes of the world. To point to the Saviour, and direct lost sinners to Him, proclaiming: "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world!" To point to the Cross—to "show forth the death of the Lord." To point to the empty grave, announcing, "Verily, the Lord hath arisen." And to point to the result of the whole—the God-man glorified, sitting on the throne, invested with all the

authority of the universe of God—all power in heaven and earth for saving purposes, for realising the objects of His redeeming work. This is the purpose of the Gospel; to keep this fountain of living waters in full play on the parched wilderness of the earth—to make the facts of redemption ever-present realities before the world, so as thereby to bring them to operate as all-powerful spiritual forces in the lives of men, re-uniting them to God.

2. Let us ever remember that *godliness*, and all progress in holiness, draws its strength from Christ and His cross, His life, death, and resurrection. The conservation of force and the conversion of forces are amongst the greatest discoveries of modern science. Force any more than matter is not annihilated—force in nature is never lost. And physical forces are convertible into each other, as heat into motion. These are but recent discoveries in science; but they have always been operative and known in the spiritual world. There was force in the Incarnation; there was spiritual power in the death of the Cross; there was divine energy in the resurrection on the third day. Yes: and the force remains to this day! Not a particle of the power of the Gospel has been lost in the course of eighteen centuries. Though it has been working all that time, the power is not any the less to-day. The Gospel of Christ is still “the *power* of God unto salvation.”

We find also in nature that one force is convertible into another. It changes its form. It is the heat of the sun in another form that burns on every hearth. George Stephenson, in the beginning of the railway age,

asked Sir David Brewster what was the power that worked the train? After two or three unsatisfactory answers, Stephenson said it was *the sun*: the heat of the sun preserved in trees, converted into coal, and liberated again by combustion, is the motive power that works all the steam-engines on sea and land.

In like manner, spiritual forces are convertible into various forms and modes of action. What is the fire of love that burns in the hearts of believers through all countries and ages? It is all kindled by heat from the Sun of Righteousness. The power that sets and keeps in motion all the machinery of the Church, every form of Christian activity, comes from the Sun. What do we see in the believer? The spiritual force of the Incarnation turned into a godly life. What is the obedience and the holy life of a Christian? It is a form of the power that comes from the death of the Cross. What is a life of faith, a heavenly conversation, the affections set on things that are above? They are so many forms of "the power of His resurrection"—the spiritual forces of redemption working in and through those that believe.

Let us then live in the rich pastures of the things concerning Christ! May we abide in Christ through His words abiding in us. Let us pitch our tents at the foot of the Cross, and on the holy mount of fellowship with Him, so that our lives may be gradually transfigured through the glorious light that comes from Him.

*LIFE THROUGH THE NAME OF THE SON
OF GOD.*

BY THE REV. W. WILLIAMS, SWANSEA.

"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through His name."—JOHN xx. 31.

THE Word of God teems with life, and it is that that gives it one of the designations by which it is known—the Word of Life. There is not a word that is more important to us in the whole Bible than *life*, and there are not many words which we more frequently find in it. Of all our wants, the greatest and most urgent is our want of life. It is this that is at the source of every other want; but the Scriptures throughout assure us that abundant provision to meet this want is made in the Gospel of the grace of God.

Sin came into the world, and sin is death. On the day that man sinned he died, and death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.

Salvation has come into the world, and salvation is life. Ezekiel saw waters spring from under the threshold of the house of God, and becoming deeper and mightier as they moved along. They flowed towards the east, where living things had died; but wherever they came

they brought life with them. They ran into the Dead Sea, and immediately it became a sea of life. There is a "pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb." It has flowed in our direction, and has reached this world, which had become the dominion of death. The Apostle Paul speaks of the reign of death,—not of death struggling for existence, striving might and main to secure for itself a footing in the world, but *reigning*—having it all its own way. We know what things do and become under the reign of death. We know how that which was once beautiful decomposes and hastens towards corruption from the moment when it becomes subject to the call of death; and that is but a faint picture of the evils wrought by sin upon all who are under its dominion. But salvation is a river of life. Wheresoever its waters flow they check the progress of death. The enemy meets more than its master. There is greater power here than it is able to cope with. The river of life turns back the deadly tide, and death is swallowed up in victory.

The text brings us good tidings—that we may have life, and teaches us how we may avail ourselves of them—"that believing ye may have life through His name."

I. The LIFE that we receive—"That ye may have life."

1. What is it? What does it mean? One thing that it means is the *permission* to live. A complete release, granted by the just God, as Judge and Ruler of all, from the obligation to die that lies upon us as sinners. When a man under sentence of death petitions her Majesty for his life, that which he asks for is permission to live.

He asks her to be so merciful as to send to the proper officials her royal commands not to put him to death. His life is not worth much, with the ruined and disgraced character which he must bear as long as he lives, but he feels it to be the greatest favour that it is possible for him to have to be permitted to keep it as it is. That was the petition of Ben-hadad to Ahab, "I pray thee, let me live;" be so merciful as not to put me to death. God has said that the sinner must die. It is one of the standing rules of His kingdom, a rule based upon the principle which is the foundation of His everlasting throne, that "the soul that sinneth shall die." That means more than the death of the body. It involves the death of the soul, or as it is expressed by our Lord Jesus, the casting of the soul and body into hell. That is the fate to which we have exposed ourselves by our sins, a fate which has already overtaken many—we know not how many—who were once in the same circumstances with ourselves. When we ask for our life, we pray God to spare us that terrible doom. And in mercy that may be done, and done in a righteous way. The command which has gone forth to bind us hand and foot and cast us into outer darkness, may be countermanded without the contradiction of anything that is true or the violation of anything that is right. God is able, in perfect harmony with every principle of His government, to spare the life of the greatest sinner, and to say unto the ministers of His justice—"Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom."

2. And this is all the idea of life which some are able to grasp—a mere escape from the penal side of the con-

sequences of sin. But our state is such that this by itself would not be much after all. A man asks God Almighty not to put him to death. Let it be supposed that he has that which he asks for—that God says to him, “Thy petition is granted; My sword shall never touch thee; My hand will never be lifted against thee; I will command all My servants not to hurt thee—go, and live as long as thou art able.” How could he live? The sentence of death which rests upon him is not his only danger. There is death within him—the motions of sin which is in his members are bringing forth fruit unto death. Sin reigns in his soul, and the reign of sin is, and always has been, unto death. Sin is at work in every part of his moral constitution, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death. If there were no “place of torment,” there is sufficient evil within him to make sin a torment to himself. It is not permission to live only that he wants—he is quite as much in need of the power to live. He wants something to do battle with the death that is going on within him; something to affect his character as well as his state, and affect it quite as much; to make him a new creature; a good man, able to live, and fit to live for ever. We are at every moment in danger of that death which is the penalty of sin, until our character has been so changed as to make us unfit for it. I am pained by the thought of having to lie in the grave, but so it must be. Some day a company of people will come to my house, take me up, carry me out, lay me in the grave, shut me in, and leave me there. It is a gloomy subject to think on; but there is comfort in the assurance that I shall not be

laid in the grave as long as I live. The grave is only for the dead. There is a burying-place of souls somewhere within the dominions of the great God. How many have been buried there? How many are going down from day to day into that grave? How many are in danger of falling there now? We cannot tell. But there is one thing which we can safely say,—it is only for the dead. If you are made partakers of the life of which the text speaks, you are safe forever from going down to the pit.

This is what the life is,—religion, the grace of God in the heart of man. It pervades the whole character, just as natural life pervades the whole body in which it dwells. The life of the tree reaches every leaf and every fibre of every leaf, and fills it. Wherever a living body is touched, life meets that touch, and answers from within, "I am here." It is pushing everywhere—it is taste in the mouth, it is smell in the nostrils, it is hearing in the ear, it is vision in the eye, it is energy to move and to act throughout the whole constitution. The dead is dead everywhere, but the living is everywhere alive. When the heart is dead, the hand cannot move; but where there is life within, it reaches to the tips of the fingers.

And the moral character of man affects his whole being. His circumstances may change, and leave him in everything great just that which he was before. A large fortune would make a great change in a poor man. It would change his dress, change his residence, change his companions, and marvellously increase the number of his relatives; but under the black broad-

cloth and in the mansion you would meet the same man as you used to meet under the fustian and in the cottage. There are things in his nature that are too deep for circumstances to reach. Wealth must say, "I cannot move them," and education must say, "I cannot touch them." It is that which a man is that affects him through and through. If he is a bad man, the badness reaches everywhere; there is not a power or a passion which his sin has not corrupted and depraved. It affects his feelings towards all and everything. It affects every resolution that he forms and every desire that he entertains; and very often some one particular sin gets such a mastery over him that he sees everything in its light. He seems unable to love, or hate, or think, or do anything but according to the dictates of that all-controlling sin. Some have become such sots that they feel that there is nothing throughout the whole of God's creation of any value but strong drink, and that it is not worth their while to exert themselves for any other purpose than to get abundance of drink; some have become so worldly that they feel that the chief end of man is to make money. It is in accordance with this feeling that they understand, and wish, and resolve, and love, and hate; and their conscience, though it may be severe on other points, is willing to make large allowances in favour of money, and to let all the faculties under its charge fall on their knees and worship the golden god. Thus it is in respect of every reigning sin—it is death to every good, death everywhere, death always.

Religion is life, and when present in man it pervades

his whole character. It enables his understanding to see all things in a new light, makes his intellect bow to the authority of the Word of God, conforms his will to the will of the Master, sets his affections upon things that are on high, gives unto his conscience the peace that passeth understanding, turns away his eyes from beholding vanity, guides his feet into the way of peace; it gives a character to his relations with God and his dealings with men; it enables him to hold communion with the world to come, and to use this world without abusing it. Its influence reaches from the highest heaven to the lower parts of the earth, for it makes a man obedient to his God and merciful to the life of his beast. Unless our religion thus controls us, it is not the life; unless it is everywhere, it is nowhere, and we have only the name to live whilst we are dead.

3. And this life is indispensable, not only to secure for us admission into heaven at last, but also to enable us to do all that we have to do on our way there. The dead can only go where it is carried. Power must be brought to bear upon it from without before it moves at all. But to do our work, to contend with our difficulties, to withstand our temptations, to fight our battles, and to push on and on against the stream until we reach the heavenly city, we must—there is no alternative—we must have life.

II. The way in which we receive life. "And that believing ye might have life through His name."

Christ's name is above every name. It fills the heavens, fills the earth, and is itself full of life. He is

"Christ our life—the Prince of life; in Him is life, and the life is the light of men. He is the way, the truth, and the life—He is the resurrection and the life—He came that we might have life, and that we might have it more abundantly." It is a fact that is acknowledged throughout all the dominions of the King of kings, that he that hath the Son of God hath life.

1. There is merit in His name to save the life which has been forfeited by sin. The law which has been transgressed demands the life of the transgressor. We have all done those things which are worthy of death. The wages of sin is death, and whatever that may mean, we must confess that we have justly exposed ourselves to it. And we have done nothing to deserve exemption from it. We have absolutely nothing that is acceptable unto God to offer as a ransom for our life. Go to the throne of the great Judge of all, and take with you all your goods and your chattels, your good qualities and your good deeds, your alms and your gifts, your labours and your sacrifices, your repentance and your tears, your vows and your resolutions, and offer them all as a ransom for your soul; I tell you that they shall be utterly rejected. All these things fall infinitely beneath the standard of that which is required of you. Die you must, and die for ever, for all that such things as these can do in your behalf. "What then shall I do?" Go to the Throne, taking nothing with you but the NAME, and the sentence of death under which you lie shall be reversed in a moment, and you shall live. Our sins are many, as the stars of heaven for multi-

tude, and weighty as the everlasting mountains. All the good that has ever been done by us is lighter than vanity in comparison with them. But the moment you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, God puts the NAME on the other side of the scales, and immediately down comes the balance on the side of life, and from that moment it is definitely and unchangeably determined that you shall never die.

His name has boundless influence in heaven. It decides everything there. He knows it well Himself, and tells it us for our comfort. "Whatsoever ye ask the Father in My name, I will do it." You have many things to ask for, but first of all ask for your life, *in His name*, and as sure as God is sitting on His throne, and Christ on His right hand, you shall have it. God Himself has ordained that whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

2. There is power in His name to restore life to the dead. He is the Fountain of life. "God created all things by Jesus Christ." "Through Him He made the worlds." "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made." "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." What was before that? Can you form any conception? There is nothing to hear, nothing to see, nothing to touch, for nothing exists. He lives from eternity and lives alone—there is no life save His own. But listen! A word is at length spoken, and with the word life issues forth, a mighty, swelling river. It divides itself into a myriad streams, streams of life everywhere. There is living grass, there are living trees, living beasts, living

fishes, living fowls, and last of all there is living man. The word flies right and left through the vast expanse, carrying life with it wherever it goes.

When our Lord Jesus was on earth, going about from Galilee to Jerusalem, and back again another way, His steps were always accompanied with life. Death shrank from His approach, and fled when it heard the sound of His footsteps. Whether it had only begun its work, or was half through, or nearly finished, it had to stop in a moment when Jesus came near. The palsy had nearly killed one man, but when Jesus spoke it was obliged immediately to go away, taking all the seeds of death which it had sown in the poor man along with it. The leprosy is rotting away another, but when Jesus speaks it is obliged to depart that very instant. A woman has been dying for many years, but she touches the hem of His garment, and finds enough life there to drive death from her constitution. The voice of Jesus strikes against the dead drum of a dead man's ear, and in a moment he is a living man.

All these things are only emblems of that which is infinitely greater. He gave these instances of His power over the world of matter to enable us to understand and to realise the power that His name has over all things in the world of spirits. The sins that kill the soul can no more withstand contact with Him than the diseases which kill the body: "The first man Adam was made a living soul, the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." Sin kills. The sinner dies. Human means might be found to polish him on the outside, but that answers little purpose while death is progressing

within him. The great question is—How to stop the death? There is only one way—by believing in the name of the Son of God. The first contact of faith with Christ at once arrests the ravages of death. You know, my brethren, that this is true. You know that since you saw the glory of Christ, and felt the power of His name, sins are withering within you that were rampant before, and graces flourishing within you that were dead before. Faith brings us into union with Christ. We are made partakers of His Spirit—of His life. He is the Head, and we are members of His body. He is the vine, and we are the branches. It is the same life in the members as in the Head, in the branches as in the vine, in Christians as in Christ. The same principles which govern Christ throughout the whole of His grand history govern all their life. What is it that moves them to do battle with sin? It is that which moved Him to condemn sin in the flesh. What induces them to do all the good they can to others? It is that which induced Him to go about doing good, and eventually to give His life a ransom for many. What makes them submissive to the will of God in sufferings and tribulations? It is that which enabled Him, in far deeper sorrows, to say—"Not My will, but Thine be done." If your religion allows you to act independently of Christ, you have only the form of godliness. True religion is the life of Christ.

And it is eternal life. Virtue is immortal. Goodness lives for ever. It is a mistake to regard everlasting life as something to be received hereafter. It is the perpetuation and the perfection of that which begins in

this world. The ancient heathen dreamed of a cup of immortality and a fount of perpetual youth. They thought that, if they could but find it and drink of it, they should live forever, and be forever young. But it was so difficult to find, and if found, almost impossible to approach, for the gods desired to keep it to themselves, and had put dragons and demons to guard it lest man should come near. This is the cup of immortality—this the fount of perpetual youth—the name of His Son. And, thanks be unto God, it is open to us all. No dragons nor demons are placed here to keep us away. You are welcome to drink to your soul's content. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." This then, my friends, is what I have to say unto you as I close, and glad and thankful I am that I am permitted to say it—Come, drink, and live for ever through His name.

THE FAITH OF THE CHURCH.

BY THE REV. JAMES OWEN, SWANSEA.

"Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?"—ST. LUKE xviii. 8.

THIS is the question which our Lord asks at the close of the parable of the unjust Judge and the Widow—a parable which, as Matthew Henry says, "has its key hanging at the door." "He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray and not to faint." In the preceding chapter He has been speaking of the "revelation" of the Son of man, and of a sudden and terrible judgment that would befall men. His prophecies were not guesses; but the future was to Him like an open book. He was not merely quick to note the *tendencies* of certain deeds or courses of action; but He was already looking upon the results, the fruit, the autumn of a man's life or a nation's history. And as the words of doom fell from His lips, the disciples asked Him, "Where, Lord?" "Where, and on whom is this judgment to come?" "And He said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together." As the carcase everywhere attracts the eagles, or, more correctly, *the vultures*, so do moral corruption and ripened guilt everywhere demand the

judgment. As if Christ had said, You need not inquire where, or when, or how, or on whom the judgment will take place; but remember, wherever death is, wherever corruption is, thither must the vultures come.

Life, then, is the only security against this judgment. If we are found among the living, the vultures will pass us by; they will hover far above us; they will not attack life. And the best evidence of spiritual life is communion with God. To live always, men ought always to pray. Life is the only condition of escape from the coming doom; and the great condition of life is fellowship with the Eternal. "And He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; saying, There was in a city a judge which feared not God, neither regarded man; and there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary,"—do me justice,—“and he would not for a while;” but she did not give up; though repulsed, she came again and again and again; and at last he said, “Well, she will not take ‘No’ for an answer, her complaints have become unbearable. Though I fear not God, nor regard man” (a terrible thing for a man to say of himself), “yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me. And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith; and shall not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him, though He bear long with them?” that is, with the “elect” crying unto Him, or, as some prefer, with the adversaries, exercising longsuffering towards them, and delaying the triumphant deliverance of the

Church. "I tell you that He will avenge them speedily." And then comes this question—a question that seems to cast a gloom over the future, and to suggest a doubt in regard to the prospects of the Church. We are accustomed to think of a coming era of righteousness and peace upon the earth, when one shall have no need "to say to another, Know the Lord; but when all shall know Him, from the least to the greatest." We are accustomed to pray for the advent of that era. And there are promises and prophecies that direct and encourage us thus to pray. Now this question sounds like a discordant note, and seems to discredit the prophecies of the Scriptures and the expectations of the Church. It appears strange, as if there were some doubt as to the perpetuity of faith on the earth. How shall we understand it? Well, mark, this coming of the Son of Man does not mean necessarily, or at any rate exclusively, His last coming to judgment. The words may be applied to, and Christ probably meant, *any* coming of the Son of man. And some have paraphrased the text, "When the Son of man cometh *in the destruction of Jerusalem*, shall He find faith *in the land*—the land of Israel?" But the words should not be restricted to that; for we may speak of any revolution, any crisis in the history of the individual, or a family, or a Church, or a nation, as a coming of the Son of man. And the faith spoken of here is a faith like that of the widow, that perseveres, that does not give up. We might render it, "Shall He find *this* faith, or *such* faith on the earth?"—the faith that can wait though the deliverance is delayed. The question does

not suggest the probable extinction of all faith in the world, but the possible weakening of that faith which is illustrated in the parable, the faith of unwearied prayer, the faith of patient waiting, the faith that still grasps and clings to its object when succour is delayed. "Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find *this* faith on the earth?" Let us consider, then, the importance attached by Christ to the faith of His people, and, although the faith of the Church is tried by the delay of the deliverance, the abundant reasons why it should hold on.

I. *The importance attached by Christ to the faith of His people.* The form of the question implies this. "Shall He *find* faith?" He will be looking for it; He will be searching for it, as a man looking for some valuable treasure; searching for it, because the discovery is important. He rejoiced to *find* it in the Roman centurion, "I have not *found* so great faith, no, not in Israel." He rejoiced to find it in the woman of Canaan, and in the timid one who touched the fringe of His robe in the crowd.

The faith of the Church is important, because it is at the root of all Christian activity and zeal. There has never been a great enterprise undertaken and carried on without faith, faith in its practicableness, in its importance, and in its ultimate success. And in the Church religious faith lies at the root of all helpful activity. Without it, the hand is paralysed, the tongue is fettered, the affections are deadened, there is a chill in the whole spiritual nature. It is true that in the absence of a

strong faith there may be a great deal of some kind of religious work going on; as a locomotive engine may, by the force already given it, travel for a long distance when the steam has been shut off. The minister may go through his routine of service, the Sunday-school teacher may go to his class, the tract-distributor may go round his district, the members of congregations may engage in the work they have been accustomed to do, and may contribute what they have been accustomed to contribute; but the service will be of little value without this inspiring and informing faith. James in his epistle proves that "faith without works is dead;" and we may also say that works without faith are dead. When the measure of the work of the Christian Church exceeds the measure of its faith, then it is valueless work, work that cannot abide, that must perish with the wood and hay and stubble, when the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. I believe that all the great religious movements in Christendom originated in the impulses of Christian hearts. They were not the result of logic, but the outcome of hearts on fire. The leaders in those movements felt a great deal more than they reasoned about the enterprises on which they embarked. But then those religious feelings sprang from religious principles. It was not mere feeling, mere emotion, an evanescent zeal that is up to "fever-heat" one week, and the next down to zero; that is one day shouting "Hosanna!" and the next silent, and even frowning upon those who continue the strain. Let us have all the beautiful blossoms of generous impulse, but let them spring from the root of Christian faith. Without this

the Church is powerless; but where this is, it will express itself in speech and in action. "Necessity is laid upon me," said Paul; "yea, woe unto me if I preach not the Gospel." He could not help himself. And you might as well tell the sun not to shine, or the rivers not to flow, or the mother not to kiss her babe, as tell the soul inspired by a living faith not to speak.

"How sure it is
That if we say a true word, instantly
We feel 'tis God's, not ours, and pass it on;
Like bread at sacrament, we taste and pass."

And if we would have more apostolic enterprise and zeal in the Church of the present day, then its faith must be increased, its grasp must be firmer, its trust in Christ and His Word must be more simple and complete. Doubt is the grave of zeal; for zeal implies convictions, not vague, slippery notions, or opinions resting on the surface of the nature, but deep, living, strong convictions. The hindrances that terrify and dishearten the distrustful spirit are but a stimulus to faith. The word "impossible" is not admitted into the dialect of faith. Doubt trembles before obstacles, but faith cries, "Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt be made a plain." It not only awakens and stimulates our own energy, but it is also the element in which the energy of God delights to exert itself. When the atmosphere is vitiated, and the oxygen in it is almost exhausted, then life and light are threatened with extinction. And the atmosphere of a Church may be so corrupted and poisoned by unbelief, indolence,

self-sufficiency, and worldliness, that the fire of God's Spirit is extinguished. We are prone to rest in the seen and palpable, to walk by sight, not by faith, to depend on numbers and organisations, and plans, and societies, on human power, and wealth, and eloquence, and social influence. These are important, but faith looks beyond these—looks beyond the curtain of the material, and sees the guiding hand of Providence, the kingship of Christ, the power of the Spirit. There on the one side is the fulness of energy in God—a fulness which, notwithstanding the streams that have flowed from it, is undiminished, the great fulness, the inexhaustible fulness, the Atlantic of gracious power. Here on the other side is the Christian Church, often weak, despondent, discouraged, and trembling for the ark of God, looking with blanched face upon the difficulties, counting its five barley loaves and two fishes, and crying, "It is not enough," perplexed by the greatness of its opportunities, unprepared to enter the "open door" because of the "many adversaries," ready, like John Mark, to show the white feather and turn back. How can that Divine energy on the one hand come down to the Church on the other hand? Faith is the conductor that will convey the fire from the clouds of God. Faith is the channel along which the stream of power will flow down. And as the little spring on the mountain-side may say, "My sufficiency is from the ocean;" as the little child, burdened with no anxious thought, may say, "My sufficiency is from my father,"—so we, in our feebleness and poverty, can say, "Our sufficiency is from God." Let us drink of this fountain. Do not bring

thimbles, that will hardly hold enough to wet your lips; but bring large, wide pitchers, and take the draught that shall be in you as a fountain of life. Only let us have a greater faith, a firmer faith, and then the energy of God Himself will throb in our arm, and thrill through our whole being; there will be enthusiasm, that is, God will be in us, and will say, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, thou shalt thresh the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff." What wonder is it, then, that Christ attaches such importance to the faith of His people?

II. *Though the faith of the Church is tried by the delay of the deliverance, yet there are abundant reasons why it should hold on.*

There is nothing more remarkable in the history of Christ than the calm faith which He had in His own mission—in its success and ultimate triumph. He stood alone; and to be alone in any enterprise or sorrow is to most men hard and trying. Truth is truth if only embraced by one; truth is not a whit more true when ten thousand believe it. But we like sympathy. Jesus liked sympathy; and yet He was alone. No one in the wide world understood His mission; but His faith never wavered for a moment. He was not careful to engrave His words on stone, or write them on parchment; He simply spoke. A spoken word—it stirs the air, it is like a pebble thrown into the ocean of air, causing a few ripples to spread, and it is soon lost like a pebble. Christ flung His words into the air, spoke on the mountain, by the sea-shore, in the Temple, in the synagogue, in

the village, by the grave; and He knew that His words were living, and would continue to live, that they were not "like a snowflake on the river, a moment white, then gone for ever," but that they were destined to spread and to revolutionise the world.

We learn, however, that notwithstanding His unshaken faith, He could see clouds in the future, persecution, corruption, iniquity abounding, love waxing cold, eras of apparent retrogression and failure. And seeing all this, He asks, "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find this faith on the earth?"

He supposes *that the Church may become weary of the delay*. It would not have been strange if the widow in the parable had given up her suit. Many people, harassed and vexed by "the law's delay," have abandoned the prosecution of what they deemed their right. But the widow did not give up; and her patient importunity is set forth for the imitation of the Church. The question, however, suggests a fear that this importunity will not be exercised, that the Church will grow weary, despondent, and distrustful. Its attitude is to be one of expectation; it is to be on tip-toe looking forward. The hour will come, the deliverance will come, the Son of man will come; and He has given commandment to watch. But the watching is weary work; the night air is cold; the shadows are lying thick on the land, the stars are hiding behind the clouds; the eyes of the watchers are heavy, and the danger is that they should *all* slumber and sleep. The centuries are passing, and the great hour of promise has not yet struck. "All things," we are tempted to say, "continue as they were."

God is keeping silence ; there is no token of His approach, no revolution, no reformation, no signal victory compelling the Church and the world to say, "God is here, He has surely come."

The delay seems great, because, as Christ says in the preceding discourse, "the kingdom of God cometh not with observation." There is no startling change, no sudden transition, but it is gradual as the advance of spring. It is well known that the most silent forces in the universe are the mightiest. The sea roars, and tears the mightiest ships to fragments ; but that silent something we call "gravitation" is stronger than the waves of the sea. The train dashes on at forty miles an hour, and the noise is great ; but this earth is travelling at the rate of nineteen miles every second, and yet we hear no noise. Go to a ship-building yard, and you hear the sound of hammers all around you ; go to the forest, and you see God building up the trees without a sound that would disturb an infant's sleep. The servant of Jehovah "did not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street." He did not announce beforehand that He was going to perform a miracle ; He did not publish it at the gates of the city ; He often charged the recipients of His blessings that they should "tell no man." "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation," it advances quietly and slowly ; slowly as it appears to us. The gourd springs up in a night and withers in a night ; the oak takes a century to grow. The growth of a nation, the transition from barbarism to refinement, is not the work of a day. The change of language and of customs, and the most important of all changes, the change of religion, the thing

that takes the deepest root in man's nature, and is concerned about his dearest interests, all this cannot take place in an hour. "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise." If we did not "walk about well wadded with stupidity," if our ears were quick enough, we should hear the steady tramp of the hosts who are pledged to succour and defend His Church. "I tell you that He will avenge them," not slowly, but "speedily."

There are abundant reasons, then, why our faith should not relax its grasp. There is a contrast in the parable between the unjust judge and God. If the unjust judge hears the poor widow's cry, shall not the *just* God avenge His own elect? Whatever may become of the faith of the Church, He is faithful, *full of faith*, having confidence in His own power, in the righteousness of His cause, and its final triumph; and He will not forsake it. Multitudes may forsake it, adherents may grow cold, societies may depart from the simplicity that is in Christ; wealth may forsake it, kingly power may come out against it; but God will not forsake it. He abideth faithful. We sometimes say of men that they are trustworthy; wherever you find them, they are the same; they are not double-minded, double-faced, double-tongued; their friendship is not like the birds of summer that take wing when the cold breath of winter begins to blow, but it is like the robin-redbreast, "God Almighty's bird," as it is called, that comes to us when the snow is on the ground, and chirps at our window when all other birds are silent. Nature says that its great Author is trustworthy; He is "the faithful Creator." Has He ever forgotten to bring the spring in its season? Has He ever forgotten to call the daisies and the violets

and the primroses from their beds? He might have left the grove and wood as silent as the grave; but has He ever forgotten to tune the harps of birds for their spring concert? "If ye can *break* My covenant of the day, and My covenant of the night,"—who can do that? Who can prevent the sun-rise? Who can arrest the sun in his journey to the west? Who can make the December days as long as those of June? Or, who can narrow the dominion of the day, and give long winter nights in May? "If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and there should not be day nor night in their season, then may also my covenant be broken with David My servant." His love to the Church is a reason why faith should not grow weary. "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb?" The most tender thing on earth is a mother's love; but there is a defect in it; "they may forget." Through vice, intemperance, disease, insanity, "they may forget," but God's love is deeper, stronger, more tender, more enduring than the best mother's love, "I will not forget thee,"—"my loving-kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed." There is nothing that a mother will hear so quickly as a child's cry; and "shall not God avenge His own elect which cry day and night unto Him?" The prayers of apostles and confessors, the prayers of reformers and martyrs, the prayers of evangelists whose graves are with us to this day, the prayers of our fathers whose voices are still lingering in our ears—they are not lost, but still resounding day and night in the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. There are

abundant reasons why the faith of the Church should retain its hold.

What, then, is the prospect to-day? What answer can be given to the question, "When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" Christ does not say that He would find none; but in order to warn us, and awaken us to a sense of duty and responsibility, shows that there is room for such a question as this. And what is the prospect to-day? Suppose the Son of man came, as He may come, in our life-time, what is the prospect? Some say it is very gloomy. There is a spirit of doubt abroad.

"A little way, a very little way
(Life is so short) they dig into the rind,
And they are very sorry, so they say,
Sorry for what they find."

And they find that God is an uncertainty, Jesus Christ is a myth, the Scriptures are fables, Paradise is a dream, Calvary is a legend, redemption is a tale. We have nothing to do but

"Sit unowned upon our burial sod,
We know not whence we come, or whose we be,
Comfortless mourners for the mount of God,
The rocks of Calvary."

Yes, some say the prospects are gloomy; the Church is declining, its faith is weaker, its zeal is colder, its activity more mechanical, its service more formal than it used to be. Ravens are flapping their dark wings, and croaking of evil, evil to come. Dark-browed prophets are looking at the horizon, and predicting stormy weather. The Gospel is about to depart, to be swept away with the rubbish of the 19th century. It has had a long race, but

that race is nearly at an end. Its ravishing music has been heard for 1800 years, but that music is to cease. Its light has penetrated into almost every country under heaven, but that light is to be quenched. It is decaying and waxing old, and ready to vanish away. Is that true? Don't believe a word of it. If you took away from our civilisation and culture all that they owe to Christianity, you would take away nearly all the stones from the building. As one has recently said, "Wherever Jesus of Nazareth is worshipped, there I see comparative progress and morality; wherever He is not worshipped—in China, in India, in Asia, and among the savage tribes scattered through America and Africa—there I find stagnation or decay. Mohammedanism, which threatened to supplant the worship of Christ, is now, after many centuries of trial, found to be destitute of the regenerative principle, and potent only for destruction; Buddhism has long been lifeless; it may be said without exaggeration that at this moment the ruin of Christendom would be the ruin of the world." The Gospel has stood when kingdoms have fallen, it has lived while ancient dynasties and religions have been wrecked; it has written the name of Jehovah in the grey ashes of thrones, and now it has "the dew of its youth." Books, learned and unlearned, may be written to assail it; but "the word of our God shall stand for ever."

Let the Church grasp this word firmly. Let it not live under the sway of the visible; let it not cherish the temper that says, Count up your converts, tabulate your success, let us have it in figures. Faith can hold on without statistics; for it goes beyond the material to the spiritual realm, and knows that the unseen God is achieving results which

are unseen by men, and which will be revealed in the great day of the Lord.

But if the Son of man came to-day or to-morrow in some great reformation, in some terrible revolution, or in some crisis in our personal history, who would be found watching? Who would be found standing on tip-toe, looking up and ready to catch the first promise of the dawn? By this question He is calling us to watchfulness, and importunity, and patience. Christians, cherish the hope of His coming. Live under its influence. You may be sad and desponding; take down your harp; sound the timbrel; know that your ally is Jehovah, and your doubts will be exchanged for confidence, and your sighs for hallelujahs. The promise is, "Behold, I come quickly." Shall we not cry, "Amen. Even so come, Lord Jesus"? Come, for mockers ask in scorn, Where is the promise of His coming? Come, for the souls beneath the altar are crying, and the prayers of Thy people as the sound of many waters ascend up day and night. Come, for Thy church is wailing, and creation in bondage is groaning for Thee.

"Come, then, and added to Thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, as radiant as the rest,
Due to Thy last and most effectual work,
Thy work fulfilled, the conquest of the world."

Christ is looking for our faith to day; and wherever He finds it, He rejoices. What does He see in you? To every one personally He comes in death; and if He thus came to you now, what would He find? Would He find you trusting in Him, trusting in Him? O Spirit of Christ, breathe upon us, and increase our faith, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake.

RELIGIOUS DIFFICULTIES.

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"Clouds and darkness are round about Him ; righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His seat."—Ps. xcvi. 2.

THE Church of Christ, we all know, claims to be in possession of *the* Gospel—of that good news from the far country of the unseen and spiritual world which to perplexed and travel-stained humanity should be "as cold water to the thirsty soul."

Such is the claim ; but is the claim any longer allowable ? Does the heart of man—even of religious and church-going man—any longer yield it that response and acknowledgment which for long centuries it has undoubtedly possessed ? Are there no symptoms among us of a deep-seated, conscientious, and reluctant conviction that the so-called glad tidings of Christ—at least in the shape in which it is too often presented to our minds and feelings—deserves rather to be termed the death-knell of the best hopes of and for the human race both in this world and—if there be one—in the world to come ?

It would be idle, brethren, to deny that such convictions are abroad and in the air. It would be dishonest

to refuse to admit that Christian teachers have sometimes gone far towards the provocation and justification of such apparently antichristian ideas. Treatment of a different kind is surely required, and I shall therefore attempt this morning, in the first place, to exhibit and trace to one of their chief sources the doubts and misgivings to which I have alluded; and, next, to show that the Bible and the Church of Christ supply, not indeed a complete solution of those difficulties, but some clear and steady rays of light upon their darker aspects, and sufficient encouragement to sustain the heart and mind of man through the work of life and in contemplation of what lies beyond the grave and behind the veil.

Now these misgivings—these *antipathies*, as they too often unhappily become—are not the outcome of any collision between science and religion. They are not, primarily at least, intellectual; they are moral and sympathetic; springing largely from that *better self* to which our Lord himself appealed as to an authority whose opinion is of weight and value. They are the most dangerous and radical of all religious difficulties, because they touch what Bishop Butler—in a sentence which should never be forgotten—has told us is “the foundation of religion”—*the character of God*. Yes, brethren, if we can bring ourselves frankly and steadily to face the facts which lie abundantly within our reach—if we will but try to discern the convictions and feelings which, consciously or unconsciously, are working in the hearts not only of those who are openly alienated from religion, but of some whom we should rank high for their virtues and graces—we shall assuredly be constrained to confess

in language which is reverent just because it is true, *that the character of God is at stake among us.*

There is many a man, many a *religious* man, who, if he were to analyse and reveal the saddest and deepest secrets of his mind, would have to acknowledge that it would be an unspeakable relief and comfort to him if he could feel justified in believing that God—the God of the Gospel—were as just, merciful, trustworthy, in short, as *good* a Being as the best of his human friends and acquaintances. And he has been brought to this intensely painful and paralysing state of mind partly by brooding over the mysterious inequalities, temptations, sorrows, and even apparent cruelties of which the world is full, and partly by his own or some one else's misreadings of the words of Christ and His Apostles. The practical result is that the so-called Gospel seems, in spite and in contradiction of St. Paul's statement, to have the promise *neither* of the life which now is *nor* of that which is to come. As regards the present life, it appears to look coldly, if not actually to frown upon, some of the most reasonable and ennobling hopes and aims of humanity. It requires its followers to take their amusements and recreations but sadly and half-heartedly. Art, poetry, science, statesmanship, the cultivation of the varied and marvellous tastes and faculties with which man has been endowed,—these it seems to tolerate rather than heartily to recognise and hallow. It has no genuine and generous love of truth. It really *cares* for none of these things. Human life in all its wondrous height and length and breadth and depth, and the world which the Creator made and ordained as the abode of human life—

these do not rouse its enthusiasm. The soul and the world to come claim all its sympathy, attention, and allegiance.

And yet what is the account it has to offer of the soul's destiny and of the world to come? If it can bestow but scanty thought and labour in ameliorating the present, surely it has good news to tell about the future? Alas! its gospel of the future is a tale of lamentations and mourning and woe. The majority, perhaps the large majority, of mankind—of God's own creatures and children—have little to enjoy here, and have the worst to dread hereafter! The boasted *glad* tidings becomes *par excellence* the *sad* tidings—it was reserved, it would seem, for the religion of Christ to paint the destiny of the human race in colours compared with which the gloomiest forebodings of Jew, Turk, Heathen or Agnostic were cheerful and consoling! The victory of the Saviour seems after all to have been the victory of Satan.

Do not suppose, brethren, that what has been said is but the inflated and almost profane exaggeration of an excited and unwholesome rhetoric. It is, I venture to maintain, a faithful description of the Gospel *not in itself*, but as it appears and is presented to the minds of not a few in England and elsewhere. We are accustomed to lament the indifference and irreligion of what are called the working classes. Their alienation from religion, in so far as it exists, is undoubtedly due to a variety of causes. But surely one leading cause of the evil is to be found in the fact that some of the best and most generous instincts of their nature have been exasperated

and offended by that *caricature* of Christ's religion which is so wildly, though unintentionally, prevalent. They have learnt to see—for they are shrewd and intelligent enough to look deeper than the surface—in the Christian's God a Being who as an earthly monarch would not be tolerated for a twelvemonth, and in the Christian's Gospel a set of doctrines which make *life* unhappy and unprogressive, and *death* hopeless and even hideous. If an intelligent artisan, who has followed the supposed Christian doctrines to their results, hears another assert that he finds joy and peace in believing them, he is tempted to choose between two conclusions—the speaker is either blissfully ignorant of the true nature of his creed, or he is little better than a selfish and hard-hearted wretch.

And what is true of the working classes is hardly less true of those who are employed in the various forms of brain-work, though in the latter case the results may be more skilfully disguised. When educated men meet together and conversation turns upon those great topics which lie very close to every thinking person's heart, it is often found that scepticism has had its most powerful and insidious ally—sometimes its original cause—in what have been accepted as the orthodox beliefs with regard to the destiny of the human race and the attributes of God. *Intellectual* difficulties could have been easily surmounted or sustained, had not far more serious *moral* difficulties been thrown into the scale, rendering belief a matter not merely of difficulty but of repulsion.

All this being so, brethren,—and indeed it is so—are we not bound to look the facts courageously in the face,

and to consider whether we cannot at least in some degree lighten the heavy load of those whose unbelief and seeming irreverence may after all imply a deeper, truer, and more acceptable loyalty to God and God's creatures than the unruffled, perhaps the indolent, orthodoxy of those whose faith has never been subjected to the strain of a perplexed mind and a wounded heart?

The Bible certainly does not discountenance a freedom of inquiry and expostulation which sometimes even seems to border upon profanity and rebellion. Turn to the Psalms and the Prophets, not in one but in many places, and you will find God's saints besieging Him with the language of remonstrance and complaint. Listen to Abraham pleading for the doomed cities, Moses for guilty Israel, Habakkuk against and then on behalf of that same Israel. Above all, listen to Job maintaining his own righteousness against the pious-seeming arguments of his well-intentioned friends, and then hear the Almighty, though He confounds and rebukes, still justifying and commending the daring freethinker—"And it was so, that after the Lord had spoken these words unto Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy three friends; for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (xlii. 7).

Surely among the many wonders of that peerless book, the Bible, few are more remarkable than the fact that it should include not only isolated passages of prose and poetry, *but a whole book* in which man is represented as pleading and actually expostulating with his Maker. And thus new light is cast for us upon the nature of

that exquisitely beautiful and utterly ennobling grace of *Reverence*—reverence, without which life would be poor indeed,—for who is more pitiable than the man who can find nothing to revere in heaven above or in the earth and the inhabitants of the earth around him! But reverence cannot thrive or even exist unless it is based upon and springs from truth and sincerity; and therefore the Book which has been the chief source of this virtue, does not shrink from recording those soul-storms, those impassioned and almost audacious appeals of man to God, which, being the voices of truth and sincerity, are also the safeguards of reverence.

In our own day, brethren, there is—as I have tried to show—a stern and imperative demand not indeed for a vindication of God's ways—we cannot fully vindicate where we know so little and so imperfectly—but at least for the unsparing removal of those quasi-religious accretions, caricatures, and misunderstandings which have made the work of vindication so much more difficult than it need have been, and for pointed and persistent reference to those stars of light and hope and encouragement, which may be seen shining clearly and steadily forth from among the clouds and darkness which at present are round about the throne of God. To two of these stars I would direct your mental gaze this morning, just reminding you that as it is impossible within the limits of a single sermon to notice all the causes of unbelief—to show how social discontent, intellectual perplexity, and, not least, the sinfulness of our own hearts and lives are operating,—so it is impossible to notice more than a very few of those

illuminating, invigorating, and consoling truths which are the antidotes and correctives of unbelief.

And as the first of these stars of divine light and leading the true Scriptural conception of *salvation* and *redemption* shines forth. The Bible and the Church know little of a mere salvation of the soul, as the phrase is commonly employed and understood. Popular religionism is full of the idea; it is its all in all—the centre around which its exhortations and devotions and endeavours are apt monotonously to move. But in the Bible, though the phrase and the idea may undoubtedly be found, they constitute but a part of a large and comprehensible whole, and when they are referred to their proper position they assume a new and a nobler shape.

If we would rightly understand the Scriptural idea of *salvation* we must approach it—as the fathers of the Church approached it—from the points of view of the creation of man and the incarnation of Christ. God, we are told—in language the simplicity and sublimity of which no philosophy or science has ever been able to rival—God *created man in His own image*. These faculties, tastes, instincts, aspirations of ours—the gifts of wit and humour, of imitation, of imagination, of an enterprising and adventurous spirit, the gifts of hand and foot and voice and eye as well as of heart and soul and brain,—all these, if Scripture may be trusted, came ultimately and originally (we know not how) from the Divine Creator, and are the rich endowment which His love and power bestowed upon His children.

But man “fell.” He fell—again we know not exactly *how*, but the marks of imperfection, even of degradation,

are and long have been painfully and terribly manifest. No thoughtful and candid mind can deny that, from whatever cause, human nature, with all its splendid faculties and possibilities, was and is sadly out of joint—very far gone from ideal and yearned-for perfection. At length, in the fulness of time, after a masterly because divine series of preparations, *the Incarnation* took place. The Word, the eternal Son of God, was made flesh and dwelt among us. He became very man, the Second Adam, the new, complete, and, after suffering, triumphant Head of the human family. He came not merely to save the souls of men, but to save—that is to redeem, restore, regenerate, heal, purify, develop—every part and parcel of human nature, body, soul, mind, and spirit. The Bible—Old as well as New Testament—is full of language which bears testimony to and illustrates this cardinal truth; and we may be sure, from experience as well as from reason, that as time goes on such language will be found of richer instruction and deeper significance. This at least was Bishop Butler's opinion. "It is not at all incredible," he writes in his *Analogy*, "that a book which has been so long in the possession of mankind, should contain many truths as yet undiscovered. For all the same phenomena, and the same faculties of investigation, from which such great discoveries in natural knowledge have been made in the present and last age, were equally in the possession of mankind several thousand years before. And possibly it might be intended that events, as they come to pass, should open and ascertain the meaning of several parts of Scripture."

Let me remind you, brethren, of a few of these pregnant words and passages which illustrate what has been said as to the scope of Christ's "salvation," and which harmonise so significantly with the revelations of modern science as regards the intimate connection between body and mind, between the spiritual and the material. In the original language of the New Testament no fine-drawn distinction is made between the healing of the body and the healing of the soul. The same word, with its cognate terms, does duty for either operation. Christ *saved* or *healed* the poor victim of a physical disease just as He saved or healed the victim of a spiritual disease. The same idea is prominently brought out in both the language and the character of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Hence the Church can say—in words which are none the less wonderful because they are familiar—"The body, the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy *body* and soul unto everlasting life." Think again of what is implied in what St. Luke records about the risen body of our Lord. "Why," said Jesus to His terrified and affrighted disciples, "why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; handle Me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see Me have." Again the hope of St. Paul is for the redemption of the *body*, and, thinking of his children in the faith, he prays that their whole spirit and soul and *body* may be preserved blameless unto the coming of Christ. The Christian's body, he teaches, is a temple of the Holy Ghost; and in that great passage in 4th Ephesians, where he is dilating on

the gifts which the triumphant and ascended Lord procured for His Church, he tells us that "He gave some as apostles . . . till we all come . . . unto a *perfect man*." This, brethren, is the grand object and ambition of Christ and of His ministers, lay as well as clerical,—the restoration, the purification, the development, the perfection of manhood in its entirety—a work to be begun here on earth and carried forward in the power of Christ's mighty and ever-present Spirit with all vigour and variety and good courage (for do we not pray, "Thy kingdom *come*"?), but to be consummated in God's immediate presence hereafter. And remembering all this, is it not the high privilege of the Christian to believe in his heart and to chant forth with his lips, as none else can believe and express, that noble and inspiring article of the world's unformulated creed, *I believe in Man!*

To one more star in the constellation of hope and encouragement I will briefly call your attention. With calm and steady effulgence it casts light upon the mystery which hangs over the destiny of the human race—especially of the darkly-sinning, darkly-suffering multitudes in Christendom and heathendom, about whom the heart of every true Christian must be so sorely perplexed.

God, my brethren, if He is anything at all, is a *just* God—a God of *fair-play*. "Clouds and darkness are round about Him, but righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His seat." Nature and the course of the world would not alone teach us—at least not teach us distinctly—this indispensable truth. They can tell us

of the beginnings of a just and righteous government of the world. Their evidence, on the whole, is upon this side. But they have something considerable to say *against* as well as *for*. We must go to Holy Scripture if we would hear the doctrine proclaimed in clear and unfaltering accents. We must listen to the Father of the Faithful as he makes his sublime appeal to the justice of the Most High—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" We must turn to the Psalms as again and again they chant forth the same glorious theme—"Let the floods clap their hands, and let the hills be joyful together before the Lord; for He is come to judge the earth. With righteousness shall He judge the world, and the people with equity." There are passages, I know, which, read too literally and without recollection of the conditions and circumstances under which they were spoken or written, might seem to teach a different lesson. But in the overwhelming majority of instances every book, every page of both Testaments, sets its seal to the same solemn and yet consoling thought. Revelation thus stamps with its emphatic approval the best instincts and anticipations of the heart and conscience of man.

You will notice, brethren, that I have taken my stand upon what may be called the sterner side of the character and attributes of God. I have left in reserve those cognate truths that "God is love," that "His mercy endureth for ever" and "is over all His works," that He is our Father and our Friend.

I have contented myself with a *minimum*. I have

taken one of God's sternest attributes, and yet even this is found to be full of peace and encouragement. There are some, I know, upon whose ears the mention of God's justice will fall with a chill and discouraging sound. They are conscious that they and their fellows are sinful. They know that God hates and that His laws must punish sin. To say then that God is just is in their eyes to describe Him—if I may venture upon the expression—*as wearing an eternal black-cap*. Their idea of justice is practically derived from the prison and the police-court. But the justice, the righteous judgment of Scripture and of man's best reason, is something wider, profounder, more exquisitely perfect than this. It implies that the destinies of the human race and of every single individual are in the hands of One who knows all, who will in the long run and ultimately deal with every one of His creatures in accordance with the dictates of flawless equity and fair-play. His punishments and His rewards will alike be meted out in the scales of unerring and unimpeachable Justice; they will be found means towards the best and most righteous of ends. Our human judgments and awards are, we know, too often but rough-hewn and imperfect: though even we, in fairness let it be said, are striving constantly and not unsuccessfully to rectify these rudenesses and shortcomings. Shall man be more just than His Maker? Shall the human conscience be sensitively eager for equity, and shall God be callous and unfair? Nay rather, let us be sure that as the Creator at the beginning beheld His own handiwork and pronounced it "very good," so when,

in the clear light of the world beyond the grave, the conscience and reason and heart of man shall be able really to appreciate and understand the verdicts which issue and have issued from the Great White Throne, they will in deepest awe and acquiescence and admiration pronounce them "VERY GOOD."

THE CORN OF WHEAT DYING.

BY THE REV. D. HOWELL, VICAR OF WREXHAM.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.”—ST. JOHN xii. 24.

A “CORN of wheat” — how small — how insignificant! And yet what a mystery is contained in it! A little child may hold it on the palm of its tiny hand; and yet not all the science and philosophy of this world could produce it! The production of even a single “corn of wheat” depends on the strict preservation of all the great laws and influences of our own and of other worlds; for if even one of these laws, that of gravitation for instance, were interfered with, the sun would cease to shine upon us, the rain would refuse to descend, the moisture of the earth would be dried up, and all vegetable and animal life would sicken and die. Such are the forces engaged in the production of a single “corn of wheat.”

In the text we have our Lord teaching, from a kind of object-lesson, one of the profoundest truths of God’s moral government. Some will have it that the words were spoken on the day of His triumphal entry into Jerusalem—others the day after. In any case, our Lord’s disciples were probably excited by the enthusiasm with

which He was accompanied into the holy city, and their old expectations of a reigning and conquering Messiah had doubtless once more been stirred up within them. Our Lord, knowing their thoughts, with inimitable wisdom and tenderness reminds them of His approaching death and departure from them. And He does this by an appeal to a fact in nature familiar to them all. "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

The great truth which is here declared is this: that *life comes through death*, and that *humiliation is the condition of exaltation*. Again and again had our Lord given expression to this same truth; but the disciples were slow of heart to apprehend it. For three years had they been in close fellowship with Him, and He had become the very life of their life. Day by day had they been drinking in from His Divine lips the great truths of the new dispensation. They had lived, as it were, in a blissful dream, miracles and parables flowing in upon them day after day, so that they hardly had a thought of their own. And now, when their hopes stood highest, He tells them mysteriously, that "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone." In other words, that except He die, the grand purpose of His mission to this world would and could not be accomplished; but that, if He died, there would be a rich harvest of redeemed souls. Was it to be wondered at that the disciples should be perplexed and bewildered by such a declaration? And is it not so still with not a few disciples in our own day? Notwithstanding that we stand on the vantage-ground of more than eighteen

hundred years of Christian history, this truth is still a stumblingblock to many—viz., that life comes through death, and that humiliation is the condition of exaltation. But it is so. For—

Of what use is the corn of wheat except it die? In itself it is almost useless. It would hardly supply a meal for the smallest bird or the tiniest insect. Put it in a golden casket, and of what use will it be? True, it is a thing of beauty in itself, so perfectly shaped and so exquisitely formed. Still it is practically worthless so long as it is kept "alone." But place it in the earth, where the sunshine and the showers may reach it, and who can tell what may not come out of it! We have all read of the corn of wheat which was found hermetically sealed in the hand of an Egyptian mummy, and how it was taken out and planted in a suitable soil, and, notwithstanding that it was more than two thousand years old, how it sprouted, and grew, and multiplied itself, until, after a while, it supplied seed-corn for thousands of acres. The germ of life was in it still, and it soon multiplied itself a millionfold.

And was it not so with Him who compared Himself to a "corn of wheat"? The disciples would have wished to keep the corn of wheat to themselves. They shuddered at the thought of seeing it put into the ground. Peter went even so far as to rebuke His Master for suggesting such a thing as possible. Peter would have kept the corn of wheat "alone." A suffering and a dying Messiah was a thing repugnant to his thoughts. The mere earthly life of our Lord was indeed in itself most inestimably precious. Never had anything like it

been seen in this world. It was like a ray of light piercing the darkness of a dungeon. It was a thing of perfect purity and beauty in the midst of almost universal depravity and deformity. It was a revelation of GOD in itself, even if not a single parable had ever been spoken, or a single miracle had ever been performed. Till, His wonderful *life*, if it stood "alone," would only have been a kind of angel's visit. It would have supplied the race with an ideal of the perfect humanity. It would have supplied mankind with a pattern, but a pattern beyond the reach of imitation. And this might well have filled the race with despair. At best the influence of the life would have been local and temporary. It would nearly have ended with those who had felt the charm of it. What mankind needed was not only a model, but an adequate motive-power, and this the mere life did not supply, so that it was the death of the "corn of wheat" that really gave it its most inestimable worth.

Not only so, but "except it died," how could it multiply itself? Place a corn of wheat among the Regalia of the realm, and it will remain "alone." But place it in a suitable soil, at a suitable season, and it will multiply itself thirty, sixty, perhaps a hundredfold. So with our Lord. It was His death that made the Gospel the power of God unto salvation. Other lives have excited human admiration—such as those of Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, and others. But until then an instance of a perfect life voluntarily surrendered for the welfare of others, the world had never seen. Not only so, but far more than this was there in the death of Christ. True, that death was the sublimest instance of self-sacrifice which the

world had ever seen. It was the noblest type of martyrdom for truth and right ever presented to the human race. It was the most affecting instance of purity and innocence falling a victim to human prejudice, bigotry, and brutality that ever darkened the pages of this world's history. But it was more than this—far more than all this. What said He Himself of Himself? "The Son of man came to give His life a ransom for many." What said the Holy Ghost of Him by the pen of inspiration? "Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." "A ransom"—we know what a ransom means. We know that it means an equivalent or satisfaction for a thing forfeited or lost. And both the Old and New Testament Scriptures are brimful of this great truth. More than eight hundred years before our Lord's advent it was told of Him that He should "pour out His soul unto death," and "bear the sin of many." And when the great tragedy of Calvary had taken place, it was said that "His own self bear our sins in His own body upon the tree." And when the beloved apostle assures us that "God is love," he immediately adds that the evidence of this love is found in the fact that He "sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins." And in all these statements the death of our Lord is set forth as the pivot of the great work of redemption. It is the soul and centre of the mysterious transaction. And it is worthy of particular observation, that in proportion as men have grasped this truth of the death of Christ in its sacrificial and propitiatory character as the great fundamental truth of the Christian faith and of personal salvation, in that pro-

portion have they reproduced the character of Christ, and become a living power for good in the world. It was the preaching of the crucified Christ that pricked to the heart thousands on the Day of Pentecost; and it is this same truth which has ever since been the very life-blood of the Church. It was not the life but the death of Christ that multiplied Him a thousandfold. It was the corn of wheat dying which has ever since been multiplying itself, until almost every corner of the known world is fast becoming a harvest-field for Christ, from which "He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied."

Moreover, it is by the death of the "corn of wheat" that we have hope and promise of a more glorious body by and by. What a contrast between the corn of wheat after it has been sown a month or two, and the green and beautiful blade which we see adorning the earth in spring! Turn up the earth in a month or so after the seed has been sown, and what do you find but a black and mouldy mass, with death written in every particle of it. But go to the same spot in the early days of April, or, better still, on the morning of the reaping-day, and can any contrast be greater? So was it with Him who is symbolised in the text as a "corn of wheat." What was said of Him but that "His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men?" There is a tradition that in the latter period of His earthly career our Lord looked like one prematurely old, so bowed down was He by all He had endured. And can we ever forget the day when the "corn of wheat" actually fell to the ground and died?

"See from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingling down :
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown ?"

See the mad mob of Jerusalem foaming with rage around His cross ; and hear that cry of unspeakable anguish—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" What is it that is taking place but the corn of wheat falling into the ground and dying ! But in three days afterwards we see the green blade appearing, and in forty days we see the ripe ear ascending to the heavenly garner. And will it not be so with the Christian body ? What do we see going on day by day in our town and country graveyards ? What mean those deep dark furrows in the bosom of the earth ? What mean those weeping groups, and those convulsive sobs of sorrow ? Simply that the "corn of wheat" is put into the ground. What has become of those whose faces were once so familiar to us in our home and in the house of God ? Where are those who once were almost a part of ourselves—those in whom our souls delighted—the light of our dwellings, the joy of our hearts ? Where are they ? They are sown—sown in weakness, decay, and death—but they shall rise again ! Is it possible ? And "with what body shall they come ? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that shall be." Glorious hope ! Sown in corruption—raised in incorruption ! Sown in dishonour—raised in glory ! Sown in weakness—raised in power ! Sown a natural body—raised a spiritual body ! Blessed prospect !

Again, it is by the death of the "corn of wheat" that we have hope and promise of the harvest day and the heavenly garner. The "joy of harvest" has in all ages and countries been one of the purest and sweetest of human joys. But there can be no harvest without a sowing season; and in the good old days of yore, certain days in the spring of every year, called *Rogation-days*, were specially observed for the purpose of invoking God's blessing on the seed sown. The good old Christians of former days felt that the sowing time was as important as the reaping time; and, when rightly understood, the time of sowing is almost as much a season of joy to the husbandman as the time of reaping. And should it not be so to us in a higher sense? What is death to a man but the gate of life—an event in life—a comma in the sentence of life? To die in order to live—to die as a "corn of wheat" dies, to grow up in greater beauty and glory than it ever had before—what is there to shrink from in this? And yet we are afraid to die. Even Christians shrink from dying! Why is this? Something may be said for the dread we have of the pain of dying, something for our natural shrinking from the unseen and unknown, and something more for the anguish with which we regard a separation from the dearest objects of our affections in this world. Moreover, we have surrounded death with so many pagan emblems and symbols of despair—the inverted torch, the broken column, the sable garb—that we have almost shut out the light of immortality from the chamber of death! The primitive Christians used to dress in white garments, and to

carry flowers and palm leaves in their hands in burying their dead, and their service at the grave was of a joyful and triumphant character. And this is the marked characteristic of the Burial Service of our own Church of England—"We give Thee hearty thanks for that it hath pleased Thee to deliver this our *brother* out of the miseries of this sinful world; beseeching Thee, that it may please Thee, of Thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, and to hasten Thy kingdom; that we, with all those that departed in the true faith of Thy holy Name, may have one perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Thy eternal and everlasting glory." Alas! how rarely are we able to enter into this sublime strain as we should! "Absent from the body, present with the Lord," was St. Paul's idea of dying. And we know how he felt in the Mamertine prison, with the headsman's axe as it were hanging over him, and the moment of his martyrdom at hand—"I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand: I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me in that day."

This, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter—Death is the condition of our spiritual life in the present and in the future. St. Paul, describing his own experience, says, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live: yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for

me." What do we know of this experience? Is there a death in our life—a dying daily to the things of time and sense? To this we are pledged from our very Baptism—"being dead unto sin and living unto righteousness, and being buried with Christ in His death, we may crucify the old man, and utterly abolish the whole body of sin." Is there anything in our experience that answers to this? Nor must we shrink from the death of sin and self at any cost, if we would "bring forth much fruit." To live a life of self-indulgence in any form—whether in the higher form of intellectual activity and æsthetic culture, or in the lower form of sensual pleasures—to be occupied mainly with the things of this world—to skim over the surface of life, and to leave the world to struggle and sin on as it may, while caring only for what we are pleased to call our innocent gratification—such a life is unworthy of our manhood, unworthy of our immortality, unworthy of our dignity as "the redeemed of the Lord." Be it never forgotten that it is only in self-sacrifice from "the constraining love of Christ"—that it is only in dying daily to all that is base, and mean, and frivolous, and selfish, and in living for others, supremely for *Him* who laid down His life for us—that we shall now answer the purpose of our existence here, and be found as a ripe "corn of wheat" ready for the heavenly garner. "I came not to be ministered unto, but to minister," was the life motto of our Master Christ. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work." Blessed Jesus! fill us with the same spirit, and to Thy grace shall be all the glory! Amen.

FEEDING THE PEOPLE.

BY THE REV. D. WILLIAMS, RECTOR OF LLANDYRNOG,
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"So they did eat and were filled."—ST. MARK viii. 8.

WE are come together to-day to express our grateful recognition of the Divine goodness in the fruitful and well-conditioned harvest which has been so graciously and bountifully vouchsafed to us this year. It is a very right and proper thing that we should do this. *We*, so dependent, the frail creatures of an hour; so ignorant of the vast forces of this mysterious universe in which we are placed, and its ceaseless activities for good and evil, for the perpetuation and the destruction of life; ignorant of the conditions remote and near of the ripening of one grain of corn, of its myriad enemies in earth and air and water, of how near universal famine we may have been this very year,—*we*, I say, should feel deeply grateful to Almighty God in words of blessing, in deeds of kindness, in charity of heart and mind, for the golden harvest which has just been received for the sustentation, during another year, of ourselves and those dear to us. Let us pray, with a fuller meaning and deeper knowledge of their spiritual and unifying import, "Our Father which

art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name." We are entirely dependent on a power higher and wiser than ourselves, and in nothing are we taught this more fully and clearly than in the harvest-field; and when we feel there is a provision secured for another year, we cannot but *feel* grateful, it is the instinctive movement of the human heart; but the nature, direction, and extent of that gratitude our Church has impressed upon us by the frequency she has introduced the account of this miracle into the cycle of her services during the year.

It has been finely remarked by those who have traced the operations of the Gospel narratives on the history of the moral forces at work in the moulding and spreading of political principles and Christian practice during the last eighteen hundred years, and on the universal mind of Christendom in religion, in dogma, in philosophy, that the value and influence of any miracle or parable, and the force they gain in the onward roll of time, depend on the frequency and the setting of the account given of them in the four Gospels. If we find, for instance, a saying or deed of our Lord only once recorded, we may attach to it a certain unit or measure of influence, be that what it may; but if we find the same recorded by two Evangelists, we may take it for granted that it has a twofold value and meaning in developing the thoughts of the Church, and showing the ultimate unity of scientific and revealed truths, and also in cherishing the hopes of suffering and sorrowful hearts in the necessary struggles of the spiritual life against sin, despondency, and unbelief.

Now all the surroundings of this miracle, and the

detailed record we have of it,—and, by the by, it is the only miracle recorded by the four Evangelists,—show that our blessed Lord attached a peculiar importance to it, as if it were intended to last and grow in spiritual force and clearness of teaching for ever, according to the demands of science and politics on the resources of the Church as the repository of divinely revealed truth. Every age gets from Scripture as much teaching as it is capable of receiving and digesting for its good. Every new discovery in nature, and every advancement in moral goodness, bring a fresh meaning out of Scripture, and we find the Bible to be as exhaustless of spiritual as the universe is of scientific truths. And the supposed irreconcilableness or incompatibility of the Bible with science is simply due to the ignorant handling of both, and the imperfect apprehension of their respective facts. The minuteness of the description here given has undoubtedly a practical meaning—manifold meaning for us, for our own age, for every age.

We have given us our Lord's conversation with the disciples—His questionings, their replies; their perplexities, and His reassurances; the lad, the basket, the amount of bread and its quality, and number of fishes—barley loaves small, and a few small freshwater fish; the aspect and actions of Jesus; the work of the disciples; the order, the number and arrangement of the multitude; of whom composed, and the nature of the ground upon which they sat; their complete satisfaction; the number of baskets which the fragments filled; by whom collected, and for what reasons. Now we cannot but feel that there is a deep and abiding lesson in all

this; for the first postulate of inspiration excludes chance and random writing.

Again, the account of this miracle is read regularly three times every year in the Services of our Church. On the twenty-fifth Sunday after Trinity, when the wheat is sown in the ground; on the fourth Sunday in Lent, when the blade is springing up; and on the seventh Sunday after Trinity, when the wheat is flowering—these are the critical periods in the life and growth of man's bread; and how critical they are we often little think. This fact shows that the Church also sets an especial value on this miracle—that our daily bread comes immediately and direct from the hands of God, in a sense analogous to that in which the bread was here multiplied for the multitudes in the desert: not at all in the sense and after the manner other fruit and productions of nature come to us. This seems to be the teaching of our Church on "Give us this day our daily bread."

But I venture to think, brethren, there is something in our position in relation to the harvest this year, which may be useful for us to consider and meditate upon, to create in our hearts a profounder and truer thankfulness to the All-Giver than if we merely looked at our barns overflowing with corn. We are surrounded by subtle forces and mysterious influences which reach from east to west, from pole to pole, and from world to world throughout God's vast kingdom, of which we really know nothing. The condition of being, the sustentation of life—the complex life of men, and the life of every living thing—depends upon causes so various and remote

as to be utterly beyond the profound erudition of our day. All we know is that the harvest season, and the heat so necessary to the ripening of the corn, are also most favourable to the origination and propagation of deadly diseases, such as typhoid, small-pox, and cholera. It may be that God has so tempered the year as to ward off from our shores death and disease, and yet secure to us the appointed weeks of harvest. How and why are not ours to understand; it is sufficient for us to know that it is so.

The miracles of feeding are parables of exhaustless teaching to the Church and the world. The full and fuller explanation only awaits man's greater development in moral goodness and sanctification; according to his fitness will be his wisdom. The same spiritual force which quickened the marvellous energies of the primitive Christians and the noble army of the first martyrs, would, if undeveloped, paralyse the progress of our day, though the same truth still is the support of our hopes, and the inspiration of our life's resolutions and moral vigour, as it was of theirs.

We know that everything, from the stars of the empyrean to the daffodils that dance on the edge of the lake, cry in a chorus, "At your service." "Here we are, open secrets; come and look at us, for you were we created, for you are we perpetuated." And surely this does not exhaust the whole meaning of their being. They are something in themselves and for themselves, for the glory of God, with an ideal and a future to which they tend. And if at the service of man, then that service must be of a threefold character; for man

—the whole man, for whom are all things—is not simply body, but soul and spirit. Whatever therefore truly serves man, serves him in his complex being, as subject to the laws of mortality and yet destined to ascend the skies.

And very often, in sheer ignorance of ourselves and of our real wants, we ask God to give us those things which make for our hurt. For we often mistake our body and its appetites for our real selves, and God, by withholding the things we crave for, knowing what is best, is leading us on the road to the highest good.

Every miracle of feeding and every harvest bring us to the source of all power and the fountain of all life, and constantly shadow forth a power greater (humanly speaking) than God's almightiness—even God's mercy, which is over all His works. What was the power that held the wonder-working power in check as it were? The dynamical power of working miracles was subservient to Christ's self-devotion and His love of mankind. He was the ideal sufferer of the eternal ages and the divine Saviour of the human race; and omnipotence was for ever overshadowed by ineffable Love. There is a power in us above nature which controls all forces and makes them work harmoniously, to unfold the rose, the daffodil, and the daisy, and lines the hedgerows and covers the mountain sides with forms of unutterable beauty and loveliness, and fills our valleys with corn so that they laugh and sing. So also in the Gospels. He, the most innocent and the most mighty, was mocked, persecuted, and rejected because that no amount of ingratitude and hatred on the part of His enemies could cool the ardour

of His love. And we also continue in sin because His mercy endureth for ever. Shame upon us !

This is the *only* miracle which our Lord reminds the disciples of and upbraids them for not understanding and laying to heart. Why are you so anxious about food, so full of cares about the wants of the body ? "Do not you *remember* ?" Do not *you* remember ? These words, "do not you remember," appeal to every age, penetrate every department of thought and life, and render all of us without an excuse for not "seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness." We can plough and sow in hope, for the "Do not you remember ?" are the tremorless rocks on which every harvest grows and ripens. What is your memory of forty years and the experience of a hundred generations but the completest verification of these words of our Lord to His forgetful disciples ?

I. Now we read that some of our foremost scientists—men of learning and research, and I am not here to say one word against them or their noble labours—have, as it were, if not formally, tacitly agreed to banish God from His own creation. They continually declare we have nothing to do with God. He is the Unknown, and must remain for ever Unknowable; we are Agnostics, we know nothing of Him; He is not the object of our investigations, He has been eliminated from our thoughts, we live without Him; while at the same time every step in their scientific investigations postulates some unknown force or law of constant action which science has not discovered, but without assuming the existence

of which they could not advance one step in their researches. Science assumes the Unknown.

These scientific men say in effect, with an amount of patronising condescension to the prejudices of theologians, "Well, we may grant you that perhaps God did exist some time, at some inconceivably remote period of which we can know nothing, but He has nought to do with our world now, nor has He ever had as far as we know. Or He may have something to do now with some remote undiscovered planet in the abysmal profundities of space, but He has no part or parcel in the regulation of affairs in *our* world." This is the tone in which they approach all questions relating to God and the Divine government. God is alluded to with a suppressed smile at the credulity of the unscientific mind, and Christianity is looked upon as a worn-out creed, to be treated with the consideration due to old age and the amiable weaknesses of many of its still fond professors.

These men write and discuss for ever about the "laws of matter," "the development of life," "the descent of man," "the survival of the fittest." These are, I believe, the orthodox terms of modern science, which are interminably repeated by its votaries, and without acknowledging which no man is recognised as possessing a scientific mind.

Now this is not the proper time nor place to enter at any length into their discussions, but we may just summarise in a few words the net results of the development theory as applied to the food of man.

Our age is pre-eminent for investigating the origin of all things—not only what we are, but how came we to be what we are.

Within the last ten years especial investigations have been directed to the origin and growth of corn. I cannot now indicate the course and scope of these researches more than to say that we have two ways of prosecuting the inquiry—by the records of history, and by the deposits of geology. And their teachings in fine amount to this. Wheat has never been found in a wild state in any country in the world, nor in any age. It has no development, no descent. It has always been found under the same conditions as it is now—always under the care and cultivation of man—never existed where man did not cultivate it.

Moreover, it has never been found in a fossil state. So, if we hearken to the teachings of geology, man existed long before his staff of life. The most minute investigations into the origin of wheat have failed to find it under any conditions in the least different from what it is with us to day. The oldest grain of wheat in the world is in the British Museum, and this has been microscopically examined and subjected to the most searching analysis, but it is found to be in all respects exactly the same as the wheat you secured a fortnight ago in this parish in the Vale of Clwyd. So there has been no development within the records of history, and it has no existence in the deposits of geology.

Again: the power and the means of perpetuating its own existence have been given to every living and growing thing, animal and vegetable, and this is carried on from age to age, without any interference on the part of man. The only great exception to this grand and beneficent law is the corn—the food of man. A crop of

wheat left to itself, in any latitude or country, would, in the third or fourth year of its first planting, entirely disappear. It has no power to master its surrounding difficulties so as to become self-perpetuating. Thus it does not come under the law of the "survival of the fittest."

And what is still more singular—we have never more than a sufficient supply for some fourteen months or thereabouts, even after the most bountiful harvest, and it has been calculated that we are often within a week of universal starvation should one harvest totally fail. And how near this awful catastrophe we may have been this year even, God only knows. A shade too much, or a shade too little; and oh how little, and it might have been! And science informs us that the wheat has untold millions of enemies peculiar to itself. And no wonder it is a matter of universal rejoicings when another harvest has been secured, and the farmer's anxious labours have been crowned with success. And no wonder either that our Church, which is so careful of the spiritual growth of her children, should ask us to read in a solemn manner from the Holy Table, with its sacred and mysterious associations, the account of this miracle three times a year, to strengthen our faith and add earnestness to our prayers at those critical periods in the life of the wheat, and to deepen our gratitude every harvest-home. The Church throughout the ages has taught us to consider that our bread comes direct from the hands of God, and, strange to say, the latest science teaches us the same thing. "Nevertheless, He left not Himself without witness, in that He did good, and gave

us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." "While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease." "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." These promises, my brethren, are the tremorless foundations on which the everlasting hills are built; they are the only and sufficient guarantee that we need not fear any failure of the recurring seasons. It is because "the mercy of God endureth for ever."

II. Man must work.

"By the sweat of thy brow thou must eat thy bread." This is the condition of progressive and advanced life—of all civilised communities. The redemptive law of a fallen world; corrective and punitive in one. And more so of Christendom than of heathen lands. It is the law of nature, but the motto of the Christian. The more Christian and the more civilised a nation is, the more completely subject to this law it becomes. To the redeemed it is the law of liberty. And when Duty becomes the inspiration of a person or of a nation, then they are on the high road to the highest eminence of which a human being is capable. And what a blessed condition and wise provision it is! Under what law of existence a sinless race could live and advance in the arts and blessings of peace we can only conjecture, but for a fallen world like ours this law of work, and sweat of brow and mind and heart, is the only condition of preservation as well as of excellence. There is nothing

more healthy for our race than the Gospel of labour. Idleness is one of man's greatest enemies, bodily, mentally, spiritually. It is the enemy of peace, and happiness, and progress. Man is bound to use the powers with which Heaven has endowed him, or perish. Idle men and idle nations are doomed to slavery or rapid effacement. There is a starvation of body and a starvation of soul. The man who does not work for his daily bread is soon reduced to a degraded condition; he in one way or another becomes the slave of him who works. The idler is pre-destined to this fate. This is also true of nations. If the consumers exceed the producers, if the idle men of a country be more numerous than its working men, that country is rapidly hastening to national bankruptcy; and must become the slave of the first energetic nation that will take the trouble to conquer it.

This is also true of the intellect. He who is not busy gathering facts and material to cultivate and enrich his own mind, but grows up idle and careless, is soon lowered to the level of the brute, to hew wood and carry water to him whose mind is enriched with the stores of knowledge diligently gathered. And there is nothing which we hear oftener than the unavailing remorse of men who have sunk in the social scale, "that they had idled away the opportunities of youth, the golden and priceless opportunities which were once within their reach, but now gone irrevocably for ever." And in the highest and most solemn sense, he who does not work for the bread of the immortal soul, is in terrible danger of becoming the slave of the devil and a prey to the "worm which dieth not." Prayer, lonely meditation, devout

worship, holy communion—oh, there is work here, and this also must be done. We must educate our own hearts through deeds of kindness. If he who does not work for the food of the body must starve, and he who cultivates not his intellect becomes degraded, what must be the destiny of him who neglects the means of grace and leaves his poor soul to perish!

From this miracle we learn that man must work,—must do his part; but he does not interfere, and if he does, he is sternly rebuked; he can only confess a want, and then obey the injunctions of the Master. "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it." Those who were satisfied were not thankful, and they saw not God. And our Lord's explanation and application of the miracle drove them all away. "I am that bread that came down from heaven. It was Myself that satisfied you in the desert. My flesh and My blood are meat and drink indeed." They said, "This is a hard saying, who can receive it?" And it is the same even to-day; the spiritual application of the divine order and support of our race is not universally acceptable to the human mind. Well, now, God has been very good to you. He Himself was in that harvest which you have just secured. The communication of His own divine force is the multiplying power of the wheat. Will you humble yourselves in recognition of that goodness by celebrating a Harvest-Home Communion of the body and blood of Christ, and come and kneel at God's altar and receive the bread which He has blessed? No; five-sixths of you will rather go out through that door than accept the spiritual teaching of God's unceasing care of you, and you say in your hearts,

if not with your lips, "This is a hard saying, who can hear it?"

In these miracles of feeding, human agency was employed. The attendant and appointed servants were commanded and expected to perform their allotted work. It was not much, but it was indispensable. In all miracles of production we find the joint agency of the divine and the human. But at what precise point of time the human agency ceases (so to speak) and the divine energy begins, there is nothing in these miracles which enables us to determine. And probably it is not for us to know. When was the water turned into wine, and in whose hands? and when did the multiplication of the loaves take place, and what the full significance of the remark, "there was much grass in the place," we may not tell. So there is nothing in these miracles to help the solution of that question which seems to endanger the existence of the Church of England—When and in what sense do the bread and wine of the Holy Communion become the body and blood of Christ? The communication of the divine virtue turned the water into wine, the presence of the Incarnate God multiplied the loaves and fishes in the desert, and "these creatures of bread and wine" become the spiritual food of the most precious body and blood of our Saviour Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper. And ministers are employed in each case. What man could do was never done by Christ. But the point of time in the contact of the divine and human remains a mystery. Human ministry is necessary. And it is more than probable, if the "ruler

of the feast" went to the water-pots, he would find only water; or if one of the multitudes went to Christ to see how the thing was done, he would come back disappointed and remain unsatisfied. Inquisitive rationalism has never yet found God, nor the solution of the mysteries of the faith.

And so, all throughout and everywhere, grace and free will—foreknowledge and contingent events—exertion and faith—the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man—the influence of the Holy Spirit and the concurrence of human reason—Divine inspiration and human imperfection.

And this is nowhere more evident than in the harvest. Man must plough and harrow, and sow and reap, and bind and gather into barns, and thresh and grind, and knead and bake, and the hundred and one other little things allotted as his honourable share in this grand concern; otherwise his body, with its mysterious relations to earth and sky, to time and eternity, to matter and spirit, will not receive the nourishment intended for its growth and work, though all the cycles of immensity were kept to shed their benign influences on field and meadow and homestead. And on the other hand, man may do all his part, and yet not one single grain could he gather into barn or rick if our heavenly Father did not cause the earth to revolve, the planets to move, the inconstant moon to wend its way along the star-bespangled firmament, the river to roll on its pebbly bed, the myriad-laughing ocean in its cradle to ebb and flow, the entrancing landscapes of the sun-tinted clouds to sail in the balmy air, and the barriers of the

dawn to be loosened that the golden rays of the lord of day may dance on the petals of the flowering wheat, and kiss the dew from the lips of the lily.

Now sublimate this thought into the domain of the Gospel, and you will have our part—our bodily and mental part, little though it be—in the spiritual and eternal life. For instance, you have power over your own limbs to come here to God's house, to bow the knee, to blend your voice in psalm and litany, to kneel before the holy table and receive the visible symbols of His divine presence, and demean yourselves in bodily and mental posture as men who feel that God is amongst you; but after all you will go away empty if the Holy Spirit be not here to carry the words from the lips of the preacher to the heart of the hearer, and your Holy Communion will be an ideal ceremony if God's presence be not here to bless and satisfy the faithful worshipper. In one and the truest sense, all is of God, but He will not take you to heaven in spite of yourselves. "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

III. These miracles are characteristic of our Lord Himself, His life, His work.

Contrast this miracle of feeding the multitudes with our Lord's refusal, at Satan's bidding, to convert the stones of the desert into bread for His own sake. Our Lord's temptations and sufferings and death were all for the sake of others,—of us,—of me a sinner,—of the human family. For us was He born, for us was He

crucified, for us He now intercedes in heaven. He lived the laborious life of man, and no miracle was performed for His own ease, none for His self-preservation. Duty was His motto, Calvary His earthly reward, and the Church, without spot or wrinkle, the beauty and perfection of all the ages, the result of His atoning sufferings. His Almighty power was tempered by His all-absorbing love. The Cross is the entrancing mystery of the revolving ages, and the Christian solution of the enigmas of eternity and the heart-subduing emblem of love ineffable and divine. The love of the Cross, the self-giving love of Christ, is the central fact in human redemption as well as in the history of creation. And, oh, how all His self-sacrificing life was leading up to it in every word and every act—nothing for Himself, all for us!

He conquered the devil by abstaining Himself. But He feeds His people, that they may be able to repel the insinuations of the wicked one. The devil easily tempts an empty man whether in body or mind. "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do."

If you do not do good, you will do evil. If the mind, like the field, is not filled with good things, Satan will take care to sow evil things. If you have come to this house without due preparation, without asking God's blessing, without prayer, there will arise in your hearts thoughts selfish, impure, carnal, satanic, which will cost you, years hence it may be, bitter struggles and many tears to get clear of them; and perhaps some of you, never. Oh, the lurid thoughts and unholy desires which may have stealthily

crept through heart and brain of some one in this congregation since I began to preach, which if you saw them painted or described on this wall you would never show your face in your native place again !

So, young men, store your minds with good thoughts ; read the holiest lives, and treasure up their great sayings ; learn by heart God's holy Word, and meditate thereupon ; you will find them of inestimable value in the temptations of life, for you can reproduce them at the moment of danger as your armour against the alluring seductions of the enemy of your immortal souls. Follow the farmer's example ; it is not enough to clear the weeds away ; good seed must be sown. Take care you do not grow up careless, thoughtless, readingless, unthankful, disobedient to parents, oblivious of eternal things, empty in mind, bankrupt in character, despisers of God's grace, otherwise you will fall an easy prey to the wiles of the tempter that goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

IV. It was the disciples gave it to the multitudes.

There is the same twofold truth here also—material and spiritual. The farmers, the cultivators of the soil, are the priests of the covenant of Noah. The disciples of the Lord became the ministers of the bread which He had blessed. The ministers of nature, and the ministers of the sanctuary—of the covenant of works and of the covenant of grace—in each case are the ministers of the bread which He has multiplied.

All that the ministers can do is to bid the multitudes sit down, and then distribute amongst them the God-

blessed and the God-multiplied food. But every energy should be put forth in season and out of season, every persuasion should be exhausted to induce people to come and sit down, otherwise in no case can the ministers be free from the blood of thousands that perish from want of spiritual food and knowledge.

"And they were filled." No true wealth except the harvest. All the gold and silver are simply means of exchange: they have a purchasing power; nothing is true wealth but the harvest. The harvest alone enriches, the harvest alone satisfies. If the harvest once failed, your gold and precious stones would soon become only so much dross to be flung away. Riches, pleasure, fame, empires even, do not satisfy; these things only increase the hunger of the soul, created to have its enjoyment and satisfaction in God alone. The food in which God is present alone satisfies. If God be here, you will not go away empty. The Divine presence gives eternal satisfaction. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto everlasting life." The Apostles—the agents who were chosen to distribute amongst the multitudes the food which Jesus blessed—were privileged to gather the fragments. Oh, what precious fragments all who help to administer bread to the perishing souls receive back themselves! The preacher, the teacher, the district visitor, if their own hearts be in the right place, what lessons of encouragement, self-discipline, and mutual love! what precious fragments in the respect, gratitude, and affection from those amongst whom they minister, do they not receive! Virtue is its own reward. Do good, and the

basket of fragments is yours. The less the material, the greater the number fed, the more the fragments. Strange arithmetic! But it is the rule of three and practice of God. This is true of all lives. Those who have large means, and do but little, have no fragments to gather. There are three sorts of food, and three kinds of feeding. All honour to him who first invented the plough. And they who have ministered bread to starving multitudes have been called the fathers of their country. He who invented the A B C through which man has achieved every triumph over nature, is deserving of higher honour still, and is the inheritor of immortal renown. But He who taught us to lisp "Our Father which art in heaven," is none other than the Son of God; He is no less than the Saviour of the world. We are surrounded by bodily wants, by mental ignorance, by spiritual destitution. Help to feed, in each case, these hungry souls, and an imperishable basket of fragments is reserved in heaven for you.

And, finally, may God give you the power to enjoy what the bounty of His providence hath in this harvest prepared for you, in cheerfulness of heart, in contentment of mind, in thankfulness of spirit, and in innocency of life; and when the harvest-home eternal is come, may you be golden wheat gathered into the heavenly garner, the blessed Jerusalem above, whose glory is the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb is the light thereof!

AN APPARENT CONTRADICTION.*

BY THE REV. ABEL. J. PARRY, CARNARVON.

"Was then that which is good made death unto me? God forbid. But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good; that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful. For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that *it is* good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me, (that is, in my flesh) dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin."—Rom. vii. 13-25.

THE question with which the text begins forms the starting-point of another digression. In the preceding discourse I pointed out to you that the paragraph, the one including verses seventh to twelfth, formed a digression from the main argument. Now this second digres-

* This is one of a series of expository discourses on the Epistle to the Romans which the able author intends shortly to publish.—ED.

sion springs out of the first. This is no unfrequent feature in the writings of Paul. Just as in a tree we perceive branches which spring out of the trunk become themselves stems whereon grow other branches often in wild profusion, so in Paul's writings, owing to the wonderful fertility of thought, and in glowing sympathy with every aspect of Gospel truth and doctrine, we frequently witness a series of digressions branching out one from the other in richest profusion. Our present text is an instance.

The design of this digression is twofold—to *explain an apparent contradiction, and to illustrate more fully the statement regarding the holiness and purity of the law.*

I. *The explanation has regard to two statements, apparently contradictory, in the preceding section.*

Those statements are—(1.) That the law is good, holy, and just; (2.) That this good, holy, and just law wrought death.

The apostle foresaw the possibility of these two statements presenting a difficulty to the mind of his readers. So with his usual fairness and anxiety to make his mind clear, he assumes the position of objector and proposes the question: Was then that which is good made death unto me?

The first thing to be considered here is the meaning of the term "Death." Whether it means the penalty of sin or its moral effects—its depraving and demoralising influence upon the moral nature of its victim. I understand it in the latter sense, for three reasons—

(1.) This is the sense given to it in the preceding

section. (2.) The expression "working in me" favours the notion that it means the development of inward corruption. (3.) The result of it as described in the last clause of the verse indicates this as its meaning: "that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful." The expression "exceeding sinful" is tantamount to the term "death" in the question under consideration. This being the meaning of "death," it follows that the question of the apostle is as if he should say, "The law has been shown to be holy, just, and good in its character and design to give life; but death is an indescribable evil, an ineffable misery; is it then true that this evil, this wretchedness, can be wrought by that which is so good?" Here is the difficulty. Now for the answer.

- (1.) *There is the usual emphatic denial. "God forbid."*
(2.) *Then an explanation. "But sin, that it might appear sin, working death in me by that which is good: that sin by the commandment might appear exceeding sinful" (ver. 13).*

The explanation is that this evil and wretched condition of death is not induced by the law as its cause, but by sin as its cause and the law but as an occasion. The difference between cause and occasion in this relation needs explanation. Take the following illustration of it. Suppose a person afflicted with a certain disease. He partakes of food in the ordinary way, but this food, by reason of certain ingredients in it, in themselves wholesome and good, nourishes and feeds the disease. The man dies. The cause of death was not the food partaken of; the cause was the disease. The food was good and

wholesome, rich in nourishing qualities to a healthy constitution. Owing, however, to the diseased state of the system of the supposed person, the food which was intended for its nourishment accelerated his death. The disease was the cause of death working through that which was good. In like manner sin, that it might appear sin, that it might appear in its true character, that the fearful malignity of its virus might show itself, becomes exceedingly sinful, that is, becomes stronger and stronger, works deeper depravity and corruption in the heart through the commandment, which is holy, just, and good. Thus the direful disease of sin nourishes itself and fearfully strengthens its hold upon men's moral nature by the very means designed to check and restrain it. The extreme heinousness of sin is demonstrated by this fact—its conversion of that which was best and holiest into an instrument of so much evil. What, truly, must be the fearful malignity of that which thus draws death out of life, inflicts death by the appointed instrument of life !

II. Having thus vindicated the law from the aspersion which the statement of verse 11 seemed to cast upon it, the apostle proceeds to furnish further illustrations of *its goodness and purity*. This he does by adducing the testimony of his own moral consciousness as a Christian. "For we know that the law is spiritual ; but I am carnal, sold under sin."

Before, however, we proceed to trace the apostle's course of reasoning on this matter, we shall give our reasons for regarding these words as those of a Christian,

and descriptive of his moral consciousness as such. Much depends upon this in the elucidation of the argument.

1. *He speaks in the present tense.*

That his speaking in the present tense is an indication of the words being descriptive of his experience at the time he was writing is confirmed by the fact that when he is speaking of himself in his unconverted state he employs the past tense. This is the case in the verses from the 7th to the 11th. When speaking of past experience, he speaks in the past tense. How is it, if he continues to speak in the text of experiences belonging to the same period, that he changes the tense? And this question is still more pertinent from the fact that his experience had undergone an entire change. Why then should he, with these different experiences, speak of his past as if it were his present? Seeing that his present differed so materially from his past, why should he describe the past as the present?

2. *He describes himself as possessing feelings and experiences, in relation to the law, to which certainly as an unconverted man he could not lay claim.* He employs four terms in particular to describe those feelings, (a) *consenting to it*, (b) *desiring to do it*, (c) *delighting in it*, (d) *serving it*. Here are expressions, especially the last three, describing a state of mind and conduct that no unconverted man can properly and truly lay claim to. If "consenting" to the law, if "to will to do it," if to take "delight" in it, and "serving it with the mind," be true of the unconverted man, how can we harmonise with such the express statement of the same apostle elsewhere, to the effect that "the carnal mind is enmity against God, and

that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be"? It is clearly not in its nature to be so under any circumstances.

As opposed, however, to this, it is urged that the other terms and phrases in the paragraph are as unlikely to be true of a Christian as are those dealt with of an unconverted man. Such, for example, as, "I am carnal, sold under sin;" "what I hate, that I do;" "for I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing;" "but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members."

In answer to this contention we may note—

1. *These expressions are capable of an interpretation consistent with the notion that they are descriptive of a Christian's experience; for their connection considerably modifies their meaning.*

Take, for example, the first-quoted sentence: "But I am carnal, sold under sin." This is not absolute. It refers to him only in a considerably modified sense. For in the next verse he says that "his mind *disallowed* his wrong-doing," and that he "*hated* it." The words are easily explained on the supposition that they are the language of a man acutely sensitive to the least proneness in his members to sin, and painfully alive to the interference arising from such to his rendering the fullest and most perfect obedience to the Divine will. His case is that of a slave constrained to do that which he hates in his heart. The remnants of his old corrupt disposition exercised often upon him the power of a slave-master forcing him to do that which he hated; this would

justify the expression, "sold under sin," in the mouth of a Christian. Take, again, the expression, "For I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." The explanatory expression, "in my flesh," modifies considerably the meaning of the statement. "The flesh" here does not mean the body as distinct from the soul, but the corrupt nature as distinct from the new. But the very fact of his making this limitation implies that he had another side in which some good did dwell, and this he shows to be the case, for in the next clause he states expressly, "For to will is present with me." Here then is the will, the disposition to do good. This is certainly not a characteristic of the unregenerate man; on the contrary, of such it is expressly stated, "Ye will not come unto Me, that ye might have life." To have the will working in the direction of the good is an indisputable proof of a converted soul, for this is its first mark, its first necessary fruit. A will thus enlisted on the side of holiness must by the power of Divine grace eventually triumph.

2. *Again, this notion is far more consistent with the general tone of Scripture and Christian experience.*

We find that it is far more consistent with Scripture teaching and the personal experience of Christians to say of a Christian that he was sold under sin and did that which he hated, than to say of an unconverted person that he willed to do good, delighted in the law, and served it with his mind.

3. *We regard as a further proof of this the distinction the apostle so carefully draws between his mind and the flesh—his inward man and his members.*

This classification of the moral nature into two parts is not proper except in the case of the man whose will has been subdued to the obedience of Christ, but in whom still inhere remnants of the old corruption. It implies a will changed and purified, yet its volitions opposed and fettered by a certain proneness to wrong-doing induced by a long habit of sin.

4. *We may note also the agreement of this theory with another statement of Paul :*

"For the flesh lusteth against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh ; and these are contrary the one to the other ; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would " (Gal. v. 17). Here we have an epitome of this seventh chapter of Romans. If these words be true of Christians, we cannot see any reason why the statements under consideration in this chapter should not also be true of Christians.

5. *Lastly, we note that this theory accords well with the main idea or design of the argument.*

This is important. The best interpretation of any part is that which fits in with the whole. We have already observed that the main design of the apostle in this section of his argument is to prove that the law is "good, holy, and just." He had already proved this point from the true design of the law (7-13). Now he seeks to establish the same truth from his own Christian consciousness. To prove this from the latter standpoint is rendered all the more necessary, owing to the fact that he, from the exigencies of his argument, had made statements regarding the law which might appear depreciatory of it. Any suspicion of an attempt to depreciate the law would



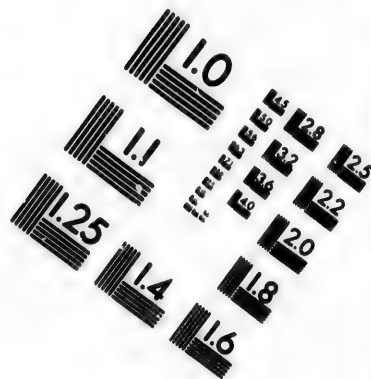
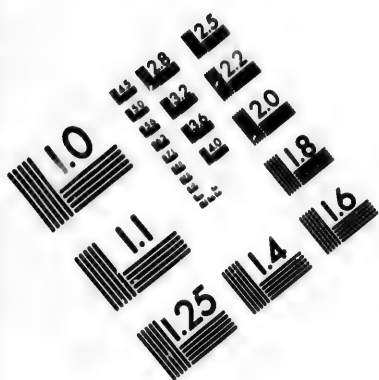
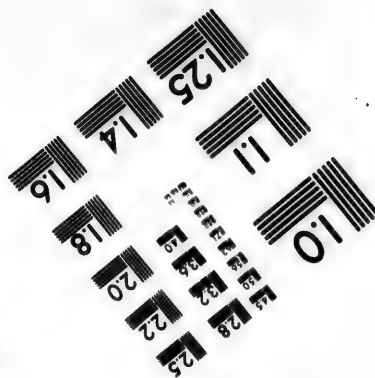
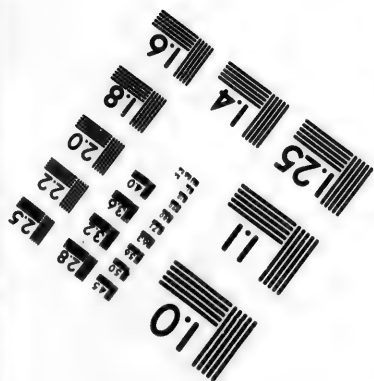
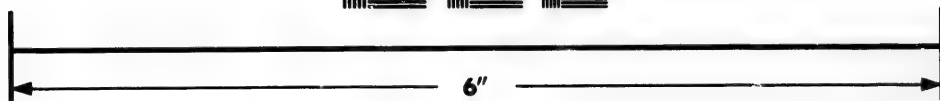
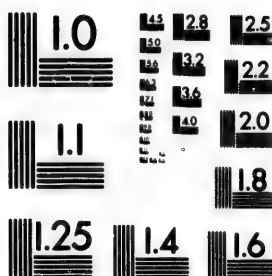


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rouse the strongest prejudices of his Jewish readers, whose respect and reverence for the law we know was carried to such an excessive length. These apparently depreciatory statements regarding the law, coming as they did from a Christian apostle, might have the undesirable effect of leading these persons into the serious error of supposing that Christianity was antagonistic to the law. For these reasons we can see the propriety of the apostle making this digression to speak of the law and to vindicate its character from his Christian standpoint.

Having thus given our reasons for regarding these words as those of a Christian, we are now prepared to deal with the argument,—“For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.” As if he should say, “Think not from what I have said respecting the law that I am opposed to it, or desire in any way to disparage it; on the contrary, though I am carnal and sold under sin, yet I know, I am convinced, my moral consciousness tells me, that the law is spiritual.” The emphasis is to be laid on the expression, “We know.” The apostle’s aim is to give prominence to the testimony of the Christian’s regenerated moral consciousness to the goodness of the law.

Now come the proofs that such is the testimony of the moral consciousness. They are three in number; namely, the mind consents to it, delights in it, and serves it.

1. *It consents to it.* This is stated in verses 15, 16.

“For that which I do I allow not; for what I would that I do not, but what I hate that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent to the law that it is good.”

Here are described three mental acts, disallowing, willing, and hating. One is an act of judgment, "I allow not;" the second is an act of volition, "I would;" the third is an act of the affection, "I hate." The whole man in his higher, his mental and moral nature, is represented by these three attributes,—his judgment, his will, and his affections. These comprehensive faculties, rectified by Divine grace, are opposed to the sin that dwells in the flesh. His judgment allows it not, his will chooses it not, his affections love it not. It follows then that his judgment, will, and affections assent most emphatically to the goodness of the law. This testimony is all the more striking and strong that it is given in the midst of so much weakness and imperfection; it is given by one who is carnal, in the condition of one "sold under sin."

Now the next three verses form another digression for the purpose of an explanation. It will be noticed that in making the statement respecting the testimony of his moral consciousness to the goodness of the law, he describes himself as doing that which his judgment disallowed or approved not, and not doing that which his will chose, but rather that which his affections hated. Such a paradoxical statement as this the apostle evidently felt required an explanation. That explanation forms the digression comprising the verses 17-21. "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me; for I know that in me, that is in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing; for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would, I do not; but the evil which

I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me."

The explanation is to the effect that that which was done contrary to his judgment, his will, and affections, was not done by him, but by sin dwelling in him. That is, it was not done by his better but by his worse self, that which he calls his flesh. He subjects himself to a process of spiritual dissection, and finds himself to consist of two parts—the mind and the flesh. The mind, in its judgment, will, and affections, was changed by Divine grace, and acted in the right direction. The *mind* disallowed the sin, the *will* was disinclined to it, and was exerted in the opposite direction, and the *affections* hated it. Yet still there was that in him which he calls "his flesh," also "his members," by which he means not his body physically, but the effect of sin upon his nature; those impulses to sin which a life of sinful indulgences had strengthened and made easy to be provoked. These, by their strength and persistence, often overcame his judgment, will, and affections. Take, for example, hastiness of temper. How many Christians, good men and true, are tyrannised over by this weakness! How often with sore bitterness and grief have they to deplore its outbursts! With what care have they to guard against its outbreaks! Here, for example, is a case in which Christians very frequently find themselves doing that which they neither allow nor will, but, on the contrary, hate. In such a case the acting party is not the real man, it is only the sin that is in him; it is only

a remnant of the moral disease from which he has not been completely cured.

We must not, however, mistake the apostle here. He does not make this statement respecting the source of his wrong-doing for the purpose of palliating in any degree its evil or of repudiating responsibility for it, but rather in order to trace the working of the evil to its true source. His object is simply to explain a fact, not to justify himself.

Let us bear this also in mind, that no Christian can commit, or indulge in, a simple act, however provoked to it, and however disapproved it may be by his judgment, and resisted by his will, and hated by his affections, without each of these faculties of his mind being seriously injured by it, and his progress in holiness being seriously retarded. Every instance in which the flesh triumphs over the mind, however reluctantly the latter yields, leaves it much weakened in its regenerated power of disallowing, resisting, and hating sin.

2. *Having thus disposed of the supposititious objections to his first statement respecting his attitude towards the law, he proceeds to deal with the second fact, which witnesses to his conviction of its goodness; namely, his delight in it. "For I delight in the law of God after the inward man," ver. 22.*

This statement is an advance upon that of verse 16. It is one thing to consent to the law; it is something more, as expressive of a conviction of its purity and goodness, to "delight" in it.

But the statement that it was after the inward man that he delighted in it, leads him to repeat here again

the statement respecting the neutralising power of indwelling sin. "But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members," ver. 23. The same influence which he confesses often led him to commit that which was evil spite of his consent to the law, led him also to do so spite of his delight in it.

Now the lively sense he had of the oppression of sin, its bondage, its leading of him an unwilling captive into wrong-doing, causes him here to break out in an outburst of feeling like the wail of despair. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" ver. 24. "Who shall deliver me from this crushing incubus of sin?" No sooner, however, does this wild wail of despair escape him than he recovers himself, and in a strain of joyful gratitude answers his own question: "I thank God through our Lord Jesus Christ." His bursting gratitude will not allow him even time to use all the words necessary to a complete expression of the thought. Something we must supply here. It is not difficult to do so. The complete thought, no doubt, is, that through our Lord Jesus Christ he should obtain deliverance from the body of death that weighed so oppressively upon his soul—that sin, which so grievously hampered his movements in his attempt to perfect holiness in the fear of God,—from this he was assured of deliverance through the Lord Jesus Christ.

3. *The third fact he mentions as betokening his conviction of the goodness of the law is that he served it.*

Here again we may note that this serving the law is an advance upon "the delighting in it" of ver. 22. His consenting to, his delighting in, and his serving the law represent three different grades of evidences of his conviction of its goodness.

In the face of these distinct declarations no one, whether Jew or Gentile, could justly charge the apostle with disparagement of the law. His whole attitude in reference to it is shown to be clearly one of highest esteem and fervent admiration. Nevertheless, he makes it very evident that it was utterly unable to secure his deliverance from sin and its grievous bondage.

Two lessons—

1. *The exposition the words give of the true Christian attitude towards sin.*

It is demonstrated to be one of constant, unceasing conflict with it. Its bondage must be felt, and there must be a constant effort to break its bonds. This involves a real active struggle—the flesh lusting against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh. The Christian's hope and security lie in this struggle. He cannot afford to forget the existence in him of sin. There is great peril in this forgetfulness. Sometimes Christians are apt to do this. In the fulness of the joy of pardon they forget the existence of the sin that still dwells in them. Many a precious child of God has had to bear a severe penalty for this forgetfulness. David may be instanced as a striking example of this. No child of God experienced more fully the joy of pardon or sang more sweetly of its happiness than he. So well has

he done this that Paul could find no more fitting words to convey his own feelings on this matter: "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin" (Rom. iv. 6-8). Yet we know how he who thus sang became a prey to his indwelling sin.

Peter may be cited as another example of the same truth. He was somewhat afflicted with the sin of self-seeking. It seemed to be his indwelling sin. On more than one occasion this weakness asserted itself very strongly, but never so strongly as when his soul was filled with joy by Christ's special recognition of his intimate relation to him upon his notable confession (Matt. xvi. 16). From motives of purest self-seeking he attempted to dissuade his Lord from fulfilling the great purpose of His coming to the world, for which conduct he drew upon himself the Lord's severest rebuke (Matt. xvi. 22, 23). It behoves us therefore not to forget, under any circumstances of spiritual joy, the fact of the existence of sin in us, or be in any way disregarding of the power it still wields. The examples cited show that there is a great need-be for constant and wakeful watchfulness.

2. The struggle against sin steadily and faithfully carried on will result ultimately in victory.

If we read this seventh chapter carefully, we shall see that the end is victory to the spirit as against the flesh. Each successive step in the battle seems to be one of

increased weakness on the part of sin and increased power on the part of holiness and purity. The case of these two contending parties is much like that of Saul and David: "Now there was a long war between the house of Saul and the house of David; but David waxed stronger and stronger and the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker." So in this war between the mind and the flesh, the mind will wax stronger and stronger and the flesh will wax weaker and weaker.

We must also not forget the ground and assurance of this final victory—Jesus Christ. The power that sustains us in the battle comes from Him. Every spark of hatred of sin has been kindled by His love, and every germ of love for and aspiration towards it has been planted by His grace.

SEARCHING FOR GOD.

BY THE REV. D. LLOYD JONES, M.A., LLANDINAM.

"Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?"—JOB xi. 7.

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."—1 TIM. iii. 16.

THE book in which the above questions are to be found is in many respects the most remarkable in the literature of the world. It can claim a higher antiquity than the earliest productions of Greece, for we are driven by an overwhelming mass of evidence to place its date centuries before the time of Homer, Hesiod, and Archilochus; and there are strong grounds for believing that it was composed before any of the so-called "sacred records" of the heathen world. This book of Job bears a favourable comparison as regards antiquity with the Veda, the Zendavesta, the Tripitaka, and the Koran. Even "the Rig-Veda, which embodies the early religious conceptions of the Indo-Aryan race, and which carries us back to a period of from 1000 to at least 1500 B.C.," cannot be proved to have been collected by its reputed compiler Vyasa before the age of Job. Though eminent European scholars are of opinion that the earliest literary

documents of India cannot be placed farther back than 1300 or 1400 B.C., it is generally conceded by the most trustworthy critics that there is nothing in the book of Job to prove that it was not composed as early as "those parts of the Pentateuch which appear to belong to the patriarchal age." The hypothesis that its author lived after the Captivity is given up as untenable. Indeed there are in the contents of the book itself not a few facts which lend a strong colour to the view of Eusebius, who fixes its date at two ages before Moses, or about 1800 B.C.

It is not only superior to all other books in its antiquity, but also in the importance of its themes, the purity and simplicity of its language, and the sublimity and grandeur of its sentiments. The subjects it discusses are great and profound. It attempts to solve the perplexing problems presented to us in the adversity of the virtuous and the prosperity of the wicked. It states men's ideas of Providence in ancient times, in that part of Asia where Job lived (probably the northern part of Arabia Deserta, between Palestine and the Euphrates). It discusses the existence and nature of a Supreme Intelligent Personal God, and His government over the elements and forces of the physical universe as well as over the free-will actions of men. His vivid descriptions of the excellency and majesty of God are so sublime that they have never been surpassed in any literary production ancient or modern.

The great question which it attempts to answer is, How are the righteous afflicted consistently with the justice of God? or, "Can goodness exist irrespective of

reward? Can the fear of God be retained by men when every inducement to selfishness is taken away?" or, "Is God a Being that can be loved without any external and adventitious inducements from the works of His hands in creation and providence?" Such was the exalted theme which occupied the attention of Job and his friends, and in their treatment of it they show earnestness, grasp of thought, clearness, and vigour. The debate is carried on in a poetic form, and only the prologue and the epilogue are written in prose. Each of the friends delivers three speeches, and Job is allowed to reply to each. The chapter in which the words of the text are to be found forms the first speech of Zophar, who is indignant with his friends for not overwhelming Job with their arguments, and with Job for venturing to deliver a speech in his own defence in which he asserts his innocence. Zophar's spirit was touched, for to him the calamities which had befallen Job constituted an unanswerable proof of his guilt. "Thou hast said, My doctrine is pure, and I am clean in thine eyes. But oh that God would speak and open His lips against thee, and that He would show thee the secrets of wisdom that they are double to that which is! Know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth." Here he implies that Job was not conscious of the sins and iniquities he was guilty of, but that they were well known to God. The Governor of the universe is infinite in knowledge and wisdom, and inflicted a lighter punishment upon the patriarch than his iniquities deserved. Though enveloped in clouds and darkness, He never acts from passion or caprice. The reasons

for the dispensations of His providence are known unto Himself, but hidden from men. He has His "secrets of wisdom" which we cannot pry into or find out, God's government is so general, complex, and minute; it is incomprehensible and unfathomable to the understanding of a finite creature. It is beyond the power of our faculties to arrive at an adequate idea of His sovereign wisdom. Be content to be ignorant, for we cannot understand the perfections of the Almighty. Thus Zophar would persuade Job to confess against the testimony of his memory and conscience, that he was overwhelmed with grievous calamities because he had committed some heinous crimes against Heaven. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection?"

This century is distinguished by its remarkable progress in the path of physical discoveries, but, strange to say, as our knowledge of the material universe is advancing, there is growing up a system of philosophy which teaches the impossibility of attaining any clear and certain knowledge of God and the unseen world. In the words of an able writer, "Ignorance of God has been more commonly regarded as a calamity or a sin. In our days, as is well known, it comes to us in a new form. Ignorance of God is now taught as a necessity of reason. The unknowableness of God has been formulated as a philosophy. It has even been defended as a theology and hallowed as a religion. The sublimation of rational piety has been gravely set forth as that blind wonder which comes from the conscious and necessary ignorance of God." Atheistic agnosticism is

struggling to undermine Christian theism, and the chief point in its creed is that God is a Being "unknown and unknowable." The question it asks and answers in the negative is, "Canst thou by searching find out God?" The words of the text suggest two observations bearing upon the above subject.

I. The history of heathen nations proves that man, when left to his own unaided reason, has never been able to attain an adequate knowledge of God as a Personal Holy Being, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe.

Idolatry prevailed in all the countries around Palestine in ancient times. Whatever proofs can be advanced in favour of the view that all the Semitic races were originally monotheists, it is beyond doubt that in the course of ages the countries which they inhabited were invaded by an irresistible tide of idolatry and polytheism. These races, including the Phœnicians, Syrians, Arabians, Moabites, Ammonites, Assyrians, and later Babylonians, worshipped Baal, Adonis, Moloch, Rimmon, Ashtoreth, Chemosh, Asshur, and a host of other false gods. Dualism, or a "belief in two original uncreated principles, a principle of good and a principle of evil," which were also "two real persons possessed of will, intelligence, power, consciousness, and other personal qualities," prevailed in Persia. In Egypt polytheism in its grossest forms prevailed all over the land. It was believed that certain kinds of animals possessed a sacred character, and the masses of the people recognised them as gods and paid unto them divine homage. Yea more,

it was an important part of their creed that "a deity absolutely became incarnate in an individual animal, and so remained till its death." The natural fruit borne by such religious beliefs was the universal prevalence of low and degrading kinds of animal worship. The Greek religion was a worship of Nature. The gods of the Greeks corresponded "to certain parts of the sensible world, or to certain classes of sensible objects comprehended under abstract notions." The Greek beheld the beautiful and sublime sceneries of nature, the restless activity of physical forces, sky, sun, and stars,—earth, rivers, and oceans,—volcanoes, earthquakes, and storms, and was led by his highly imaginative nature to invest each of them with a personality, if not to worship the invisible powers that produced them. In fact, they personified and worshipped the elements and forces of Nature. Thus when man lost that religion which revealed unto him the Maker of the universe, he manufactured manifold false religions for himself. Almost the same kind of polytheism prevailed in Rome as in Greece. According to Canon Rawlinson, the former was distinguished from the latter only by "its comparatively scanty development of the polytheistic idea in respect of nature and the parts of nature, and its simple development of that idea in connection with human life, its actions, parts, and phases." We cannot even glance at the spiritual condition of the heathen world without being impressed with the remarkable correctness of the picture drawn of it in Holy Writ. "Go in and behold the wicked abominations that they do here," said the Lord to Ezekiel. "So I went in and saw," saith the

prophet; "and behold, every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel" (borrowed from the Gentiles) "portrayed upon the wall round about." In Persia and Egypt, Greece and Rome, industry and skill, philosophy and science, were utterly impotent to arrive at an adequate knowledge of God as a Personal, Holy Being, the Creator and Sustainer of the Universe. "They changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things. They changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever." When the great Apostle of the Gentiles visited the most distinguished seat of learning in the ancient world—a city whose poets and philosophers, statesmen and orators, have never been surpassed for culture, refinement, and intellectual vigour—what did he find as the fruit of centuries of civilisation? Nothing but an altar bearing an inscription proclaiming with silent but sad eloquence the failure of man to find out God. "For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To the Unknown God." That God alone possessed absolute existence. He filled the universe with His presence. He "made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth," and determined "the bounds of their habitations." "That they should seek the Lord, if happily they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us. For in Him we live, move, and have our being."

This was the spiritual condition of a country which had been more blessed with a large number of men of brilliant talents, refined tastes, and high culture than all other countries in an equal period from the beginning of the world to the present day.

After all their profound researches this is the fruit—a gloomy confession upon a deserted altar that these thoughtful philosophers, talented poets, and eloquent orators had failed to find out God. “The world by wisdom knew not God.” Scepticism and depravity flourished to an alarming extent in Corinth and Rome, the centres of ancient civilisation.

In view of the above facts one question which forces itself on our attention and demands an answer is: What barriers stand in the way and render it difficult if not impossible for man to make progress in knowledge of spiritual things? Since he by the normal exercise of his faculties can find out the secrets of Nature, why can he not attain an adequate knowledge of God?

To this question we shall endeavour to give a pertinent though not an exhaustive answer. Man is not able by means of his own unaided reason to find out God.

1. Because God is an immaterial, invisible, spiritual Being, He cannot be perceived through any material mediums. He is not amenable to our bodily senses. A young prophet brought up as a carpenter in an obscure village in the North of Galilee, gave utterance in one expression to a more profound and sublime sentiment regarding God than anything to be found in the works of the great philosophers: “God is a Spirit; and they that worship Him, must worship Him in Spirit and in truth.” We are

conscious of the existence of an immaterial, intelligent, free, responsible spirit in ourselves, but it is wedded unto matter. We are under the dominion of matter and its laws. We are influenced by our physical organisation through our appetites and passions ; but God is an infinite Spirit, with an absolute and eternal existence, in no way dependent on the physical and vital forces of the material universe. "Hast thou eyes of flesh, or seest thou as man seeth?" "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him. On the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him." "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out." "Thou canst not see My face, for there shall no man see Me and live."

Still there is a craving in our finite spirits for the Infinite Spirit of God. He is the invisible source of that mysterious influence which permeates our moral nature, and finds definite expression in the dictates of the awakened conscience; but He is out of the reach of our bodily senses, through which we are able to study the works of His hands.

2. Because the manner in which God is related to the material and spiritual universe, and the mode in which He exercises dominion over them, is an unfathomable gulf of mystery to us. When we gaze at the stupendous and complex machinery of nature, it strikes us as self-sufficient and self-acting. It is a chain of physical causes and physical effects. There is in it no break, flaw, or gap through which the divine influence can flow in, to produce or even control its operations.

Planets revolve on their axes and fly on their orbits; the sun pours out from his surface to every inch of space in its vast system a constant flood of light and heat; water ascends in vapour to the clouds and descends in showers to the earth; brooks and rivers run incessantly through deep ravines and wide valleys into the ocean; the earth turns one hemisphere to the perpendicular rays of the sun, winter recedes, spring and summer advance. We know the physical causes of all these phenomena. If so, reason exclaims, Where is the hand of God? The problem becomes still more involved if we accept the theories propounded by Laplace and Darwin. What if the solar system was "evolved by means of natural law from a condition of intensely heated vapour rotating on its axis from east to west precisely similar to that of many nebulous bodies now existing in the universe? What if man has been evolved in the course of a vast period—a hundred, forty, or ten millions of years—from some past germs of life, which appeared on earth when it became sufficiently cool and consolidated to support it? What if we accept the pedigree of man through twenty-two stages from the Moneron as offered to us by an eminent German naturalist? In such an endless series of causes and effects what link is touched by the finger of God? Look at the railway locomotive speeding on its way along the rails, but decreasing its speed, and coming to a standstill exactly opposite the station platform. There is no great mystery in the matter, for you can see the hand of the engine-driver upon the lever, and the fireman casting fresh coal into the furnace. Does the

universe consist of nothing but matter and force? Is it the result of blind chance? Are we to stop short in our "explanations of phenomena of molecules, and motion, and inertia, and attraction, and heat, and electricity, and heredity, and development, and variation, and environment?" Reason protests against such an unwarrantable assumption. Even the champion of agnosticism is compelled to admit that man is "ever in the presence of an Infinite and External Energy from which all things proceed." We maintain that the world is drifting towards some grand moral consummation, the victory of justice, freedom, and truth. There is an evident plan unfolded in the course of human history, and what is it but the realisation of the eternal design of the Governor of the Universe who is hidden out of our sight? His moral attributes reveal themselves in the gradual and irresistible advance of great moral principles. But where is He? Through what medium does He convey His mysterious energy into the material and spiritual universe? "He giveth to all life and breath and all things." "In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." "He is not far from every one of us; for in Him we live, move, and have our being." But how are we related to Him? This is a deep abyss of mystery over which we may wonder and adore, but which is utterly beyond the power of reason to fathom its depths.

3. Because God is an incomprehensible Being, infinite in all His attributes, whose nature and perfections our finite understanding cannot measure and exhaust. He is not inconceivable, and not "unthinkable," but He is

incomprehensible. We cannot picture Him before the imagination. We cannot know all about Him and give expression to it in language. We cannot set limits to His duration, presence, wisdom, and power. Still our inability to comprehend Him does not shake our conviction of His existence, for we perceive Him through our moral nature, and feel His influence upon our souls. It is an axiom which we are compelled to accept by the laws of our mental constitution, that nothing which is changeable and progressive can be eternal. Even reason declares that the universe must have had a beginning; and when its vast stores of energy are dissipated, it must have an end. Look into space, and you feel unable to set limits to it even in imagination. This, however, does not undermine your belief in its existence. Still you retain an instinctive conviction that space is an indispensable condition of the existence of all other things. All realities are "unthinkable" without the conception of space. Lead a peasant to the summit of a cliff above the ocean; to him the ocean looks boundless and unfathomable; tell him, that since he cannot comprehend it, see its lowest depths and furthest shore, therefore it does not exist. Will he not answer, Not so, for though I cannot compass it within the range of my bodily vision, it is not unthinkable, for I perceive the extension, form, and colour of its surface; yea, I hear the beating of its waves on the cliffs beneath. So does man feel some mysterious influences from the ocean of the Divine Existence striking against the tender chords of his moral nature. A blind man may feel the warmth of the sun, and may be certain that there is some external source

from which it issues. So may we apprehend God, though we cannot comprehend Him; His nature infinitely exceeds the capacities of our finite understanding. "Touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out; He is excellent in power and in judgment, and in plenty of justice." "It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea." "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy Presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there; if I make my bed in hell, behold Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." Let us be on our guard, in laying hold of the personality of God, that we do not lose sight of His infinitude, and in studying His infinitude that we do not forget His personality. The former is the danger of monotheistic religions, and the latter is the radical defect in pantheistic creeds.

4. Because God is a Being of the highest moral nature, the root, spring, and centre of all moral excellences in the universe. From Him they came, in Him they exist, and to Him as to a boundless ocean they constantly flow. All elements of morality are ultimately traceable to the moral attributes of God. Christian morality is centred in Him; He is the root from which all holiness springs. "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity." "Behold, He putteth not trust in His saints; yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight." But we are polluted by sin,

and therefore lack that moral affinity, without which it is impossible to know Him, for it is an axiom in morality that, in order to see any moral excellence, it is indispensable to possess it. The chief barrier on the way of man to make progress in knowledge of God, is the depravity of the heart. Thus sin and ignorance stand to each other in the relation of cause and effect. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Between sin and ignorance of divine things there is action and reaction; depravity produces infidelity, and infidelity in its turn intensifies the depravity. If we require proofs of this, we need only glance at the moral condition of ancient Rome and modern France, read the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and the sixth in the First Epistle to the Corinthians. Still, notwithstanding these obstacles, the human heart is yearning for communion with God. The experience of many thoughtful and virtuous men in the heathen world, as well as that of inspired patriarchs and prophets in Israel, finds accurate expression in such words as these, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to His seat!" "I stretch forth my hands unto Thee; my soul thirsteth after Thee as a thirsty land." "Hear me speedily, O Lord, my spirit faileth; hide not Thy face from me, lest I be like them that go down into the pit." "As the hart panteth for the water-brooks, so panteth my soul for Thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God."

We are conscious of some intolerable vacancy in our souls, and from this arises a yearning after, an intense

longing, yea, a burning thirst for the infinite God. What are these but traces of the foundations of the temple of the Godhead in the moral nature of man? The sea-bird leaves its home, the shore of the ocean, and flapping its large wings it follows the course of a mighty river. It travels far inland, and stops not till it has penetrated through a narrow valley into a quiet glen among the mountains. There it alights on a rock or a stone, and listens to the murmuring of the brook in its gravelly bed. May we not fancy that the music of the brook reminds it of the roar of the ocean? He longs to gaze on the boundless sea, then spreads his wings and starts back again. The soul is cramped among visible and finite realities; it is oppressed by sin in all its narrow, cold, hideous forms; is it a matter of amazement if it longs to gaze on the infinite, holy God? Thus many of the great thinkers of the ancient world must be considered as seekers after Him; but they failed to find Him.

II. When man by his own unaided reason had failed to arrive at an adequate knowledge of Him, God gave a glorious manifestation of Himself in his Incarnate Son. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh."

Moralists and philosophers among the heathen nations of the world, such as Thales, Anaxagoras, Socrates, and Plato among the Greeks, Zoroaster in Persia, Cicero in Rome, were prompted by the cravings of their moral nature, as well as by the urgent demand of reason, for an adequate explanation of the origin of the universe, to

engage in a search after God. The great and complex machinery of nature was placed before them, "that they might seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him and find Him." Ancient prophets were impelled by their spiritual instincts under the guidance of prophetic inspiration to concentrate their attention upon this great theme. They held communion with an invisible God. About forty years ago there were irregularities observed in the motion of the planet Uranus. Astronomers at that time conjectured that these were produced by the attraction of some other planet which had never been discovered. A student at Cambridge worked in retirement for nearly two years upon the hypothesis of the existence of such an exterior planet. He calculated what must have been its mass and its distance from the sun in order to account for the perturbation of Uranus. Eight months after, an eminent astronomer in France, Le Verrier, deduced its elements. Strange to say, both arrived at very similar results. On June 11, 1845, a Professor in Cambridge commenced a systematic search for it with the large Northumberland telescope, and on the 29th of September an object attracted his attention which proved to be the "object so anxiously sought for." Well may this be called "the most brilliant discovery, the grandest of which astronomy can boast, and one that is destined to a perpetual record in the annals of science—an astonishing proof of the power of the human intellect." But here the discovery in the moral and spiritual world which infinitely surpasses it. "Great is the mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh." "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we

beheld His glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." When He emerged into view in our poor human nature, the angels of God took a voyage through space and alighted upon our insignificant globe to gaze upon Him. They crowded the atmosphere around the humble place of His birth, and burst out singing the joyous words, "Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord." The wise men from the East, who represented the seekers after God in the heathen world, brought their gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh, and fell down before Him and worshipped Him. Simeon, a fine specimen of the saints of the Old Testament, took Him in his arms and declared that all the desires of his soul were fulfilled. "O Lord, now lettest Thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people."

We are justly proud of our modern discoveries. There is no part of the world where British pluck and courage will not carry our sailors and travellers. Scientists solve problems which had baffled the ingenuity of the greatest thinkers of past ages. One of our intrepid travellers set his heart on discovering the source of the Nile.—He forced his way on through immense difficulties and dangers, through countries covered with pestilential swamps and inhabited by cruel and treacherous savages. One day he beheld a lofty range of mountains at a great distance to the west. He pursued his journey with renewed vigour, and next morning, when the day broke, he crossed a deep valley between the hills and toiled up

the opposite slope till he reached the summit. There burst suddenly upon his view the grand prize that had excited the curiosity and ambition of men for ages. "There like a sea of quicksilver lay far beneath the grand expanse of water—a boundless sea horizon on the south and south-west glittering in the noon-day sun," the mysterious source of the fertilising Nile. "This was the reservoir which nourished Egypt and brought fertility where all was wilderness," "a source of bounty and of blessings to millions of human beings." No wonder that the discoverer thanked Heaven for crowning his efforts with such a brilliant success. But what is such a discovery to this? Rivers of goodness ran for ages through physical mediums into our world, and men naturally asked, Where was the great invisible source from which they sprang? Various theories were propounded as explanations of the mystery, and among them Pantheism, Dualism, and Materialism; but in Bethlehem the great source from which all "good and perfect gifts" proceed came into sight—"God manifest in the flesh." This is the only reasonable explanation of the origin of Christianity. The men who testify that they were eye-witnesses of the wonderful works of Christ,—who heard Him rebuking the sea, saying, "Peace, be still!" and summoning a dead man from his grave, saying, "Lazarus, come forth!" and saw the visible effects; those who communed with Him after His resurrection and watched Him ascending into heaven till "a cloud received Him out of their sight,"—these men sealed their testimony with their blood: yea more, they "unhinged this world's history," and produced a moral revolution which is now

in progress, the effects of which are increasing in magnitude and number every day, tending to become universal, and promising well to reach to the end of time. The work accomplished demands an adequate cause,—something infinitely higher and better than myths and legends, or fanaticism and fraud. Human society could never have been so thoroughly regenerated and reformed but through the Incarnation of the Son of God.

THE GREAT CONFLICT.

BY THE REV. W. JENKINS, M.A., ST. DAVIDS.

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."—ROM.
xii. 21.

HAVING expounded the great Christian doctrines in the preceding chapters, the apostle now goes on to lay particular stress on the great Christian duties. The doctrines are a good foundation for the duties, and call for a becoming edifice in the form of a worthy Christian character. Eligible sites of necessity demand corresponding structures. And Paul urges on his readers a life worthy of the grand truths he has already explained. Christian doctrines require corresponding Christian practices. In the former God gives, in the latter He asks; in the former He works, in the latter He orders us to work. Having given much to us, He is fully justified in asking much from us; "of him who hath received much, much will be required." God never expects us to make bricks without straw; He nobly helps to meet His own demands. Ample materials are ready at hand to carry out His will. Though His commandments are great, they are not grievous, if met in the right spirit. God must not be considered a hard master—reaping where He hath not sown, gathering where He hath not strewn. His require-

ments are calculated to send us to Him for the means necessary to meet them; rightly understood, they say—"Come unto Me." The calls to perform difficult Christian duties are so many finger-posts pointing to the unsearchable riches of Christ. The heavy demands made on the new life prove that the great Author Himself has full confidence in it. It is no weak, sickly power, likely to break down under the least strain. God is not afraid of its being put to the severest tension, tested to the utmost, since He well knows its infinite capabilities. High Christian precepts should encourage rather than dishearten, inasmuch as they embody God's confession of faith in the new life.

This chapter opens with an entreaty to complete consecration in the Divine service. "I beseech you, therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice," &c. Even the body is claimed. The apostle then passes on to duties general and particular. If we start with a complete surrender of ourselves to God, we shall effectively discharge our most difficult duties. Our imperfect performances are doubtless attributable to incomplete consecration. Imperfections in the performance point to reservation in the consecration. Complete surrender of soul and body to God constitutes the best qualification for the accomplishment of the most difficult tasks. Than this we cannot find a better starting-point for the mighty conflict with evil in its innumerable forms. This complete consecration must not be viewed as a bondage, but rather as the highest liberty. Christ binds His people to Himself in order to release them from tyrants. His bondmen are

the true free men. Just as our thoughts are brought into captivity to the obedience of Christ do we enter into true freedom, that of deliverance from evil.

To make man a conqueror over evil is one of the main objects of the Gospel of Christ. The Eternal King goes forth with him to the campaign against sin. When He visited the Garden of Eden after the Fall, He did not leave it without declaring war against the enemy, and the sound of victory is discernible in the very rhythm of the declaration: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." The grace of God having thus entered the field with man against the powers of evil, we are rightly summoned, not only to fight, but to conquer. The Israelites invariably conquered when led by Him who is mighty in war. With Him they were invincible, a fact acknowledged even by their enemies; without Him, wavering and easily routed. And Christians are not asked to war at their own expense or to go forth in their own strength. The conflict is both long and costly, but the resources are amply sufficient to bear all the burden. We can say—"The Lord of hosts is with us." If in a moment of weakness we tremble when confronted with the mighty forces of evil, we may hear, if we listen, an encouraging voice saying, "My grace is sufficient for you; My strength shall be perfected in your weakness." Under these conditions we are justly commanded to overcome.

The latter part of the chapter forcibly reminds us of the Sermon on the Mount. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but give place unto wrath." "If thine

enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink." "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." In these verses we have unmistakable echoes of Christ's words: "Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you, and persecute you." Many indisputable proofs are to be found in the apostle's teaching that the Person who met him on the way to Damascus was none other than the great Preacher of the Mount. Paul's speech betrays the fact that he has been with Jesus. Although he had not the privilege of sitting with the other apostles at the feet of the great Preacher who came out from God, yet His teaching is deeply imbued with His spirit. He certainly has the mind of Christ. In the text we are led up to Christ, to hear from the great Captain Himself the cheering order not to surrender, but to fight well the good fight of faith. We are bidden to hold out bravely; but merely to hold out will not satisfy the Captain—He insists on complete victory. From "Be not overcome with evil," the command advances to "Overcome evil." And the means wherewith to achieve the victory are specified—"overcome evil with *good*." However ineffective the Christian's weapons may appear, they will eventually prove themselves the best fitted for the execution of the Divine command.

We have then, in the first place, a command to hold out bravely. In the second place, we are commanded not only to hold out, but to raise the siege and overcome the enemy. And in the third place, with a view to inspire us for this warfare, a full armoury is pointed out—"good."

I. The command to HOLD OUT. "Be not overcome of evil."

The Christian ought to be unconquerable, for if on his guard he has an inexhaustible power to upbear him in all his difficulties, to enable him to resist all onsets. If he desert not his position, his supplies cannot be cut off. The power of the Church at Rome might be considered insignificant as compared with that of Rome itself; but in the sight of Him who is able to measure accurately the strength of all things, it had sufficient power to hold its own against the mistress of the world. The power of God dwelt in it. This form of exhortation, this injunction to hold out against evil, is peculiarly appropriate when addressed to the Church at Rome, where power was almost deified. The surroundings of the little Church gave to the language aptness and force. The apostle, no doubt, had in view this distinguishing characteristic of Rome when he declared he was not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, since it was the *power* of God. The order not to surrender is calculated to direct the attention of the Church to this latent power, with a view to calling it into exercise; it serves to throw the Church back upon its God. Numberless assaults have been made on the Church of Christ, but it still lives and thrives. It has, in the course of the centuries, sustained what were, apparently, temporary defeats, which were supposed by the enemy to be real defeats. But the Church soon rallied, and gave fresh proofs of its invincibility.

Taken in connection with the preceding verses, the words, "Be not overcome of evil," give prominence to suffering. Christians are discomfited when they lose the

power of suffering in a Christlike spirit. The moment they begin to fight evil on its own low level, that is, with evil, they are overcome, their high position being already taken by the foe. When they go forth to meet the world with its own weapons, returning evil for evil, they are already vanquished; when they give way to corrupt passions, and begin to avenge themselves for their wrongs, they are no longer holding out. They are affectionately forbidden to avenge themselves. Vengeance is a weapon too sharp and dangerous for them to handle. A merciful Father forbids His children to touch it, claiming the use of it as His own special prerogative. "Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves. Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord." He can handle it with infinite nicety, untouched by corrupt or blinding passions. In His hand it is the flashing sword of justice, striking home with unerring precision. The Christian, however, in his endeavours to use it, is more likely to hurt himself than to wound his adversary. Instances in which Christians have shed one another's blood by the unlawful use of this sharp instrument will readily occur to all. They defeat themselves the moment they resort to retaliation. They should suffer meekly, suffer majestically, without losing their self-control. Solomon says, "He that is slow to wrath is of great understanding; but he that is hasty of spirit exalteth folly." A hasty temper is a vulnerable point in a good man's character. A man who gives way to passion is easily upset and made to act and speak foolishly. "He exalteth folly." He who moves slowly to wrath shows that he has acquired mastery over self—

the first step to victory over the world. "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls." A graphic portraiture that! A defenceless unwall'd city is easily sacked—it falls a prey to the first comer; so is he who has lost control over himself—"broken down, without walls." On the other hand, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city." He who has conquered himself is a mighty conqueror—he has subjugated his greatest enemy, and as a consequence is endowed with a vast power of resistance. Possessing his soul in patience, trifles cannot ruffle or terrify him.

The Christian should be a suffering hero. The world's notions respecting heroes are still far from satisfactory. The man who retaliates is generally regarded as the brave, and if he has done so with liberal interest, all the better; whilst he who suffers wrongfully, without lifting his little finger to avenge himself, is too readily branded as a craven and a coward. Warriors still receive an undue share of glory, whilst the followers of the noble army of martyrs are robbed of their rightful portion. They are the true heroes who suffer with a meek and quiet spirit. When more enlightened notions shall prevail, a rearrangement of the gallery of celebrities must take place. "The first shall be last, and the last first." There is much dignity about Christlike suffering. Jesus Himself was a prince in suffering, but not a prince without followers. "But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called; for Christ also

suffered, leaving us an example that we might follow His steps." Christians should give the world living illustrations of the superb manner in which He bore His deep wrongs. He was reviled, but reviled not again, and in His sufferings He threatened not, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. He never for a moment lost His self-possession; although shot at in all points, tempted in all things, yet He was invulnerable, wrapped up in His boundless power of endurance. In vain we look for any flag of truce, for any sign of submission. He is the centre at which are aimed many ferocious and wily stratagems, but there is no approach to a capture of Him. He is never dislodged for a single instant from His secure position. He is simply invincible because of His endless power to suffer. We are called to follow in His steps, to resemble Him in the ability to hold out under the severest strain. Our power of suffering must exceed the enemy's power to inflict it.

II. The Christian is not only to hold out, but also to CONQUER. "Overcome evil."

Paul advances boldly from the defensive to the offensive. A besieged city remains unconquered as long as the hostile forces are kept outside the walls; but, on the other hand, it cannot be said to conquer while the struggle continues in indecision, making the final issue doubtful. The besieging army must be repelled, driven back, before the city can claim a victory. In virtue of the resources available to him, the Christian is able to endure a long siege; but he would be unworthy of his high avocation if he remained quietly in a state of passive

resistance. It is his imperative duty to advance and put to flight the army of the alien. The endurance so much commended by Christ and His Apostles has a strong affirmative, assertive side. Remaining untaken itself, it is able to take the positions of the opposing forces. The Christian, possessing such a power, is rightly ordered to come off victorious.

It is with the conqueror that Christ promises to share His throne. "To Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." The redeemed are conquerors, and more than conquerors, through Him that loved them. They must overcome if they are to be sharers of His glory. The great Sufferer proved a great Victor. The Prince in suffering developed into a King in glory. The suffering Messiah moved on in the greatness of His strength, capturing fort after fort in the kingdom of evil. His adversaries occasionally flattered themselves that they had the advantage, whilst really the victory belonged to the patient Victim. Their infatuation increased as Jesus approached the Cross, being strongest when He and they had reached the summit of Calvary. The enemy laboured under a strong delusion respecting the real significance of the situation, which, however, was well understood by the lamb-like Sufferer, who in the crisis of the battle declared the victory was His. His life from first to last was replete with successes; on His lips failure was an unknown word. At no point do we find Him retracing His steps in order to retrieve His position or to improve His work. No voice ever emanated from imperfectly performed task,

calling on Him to return and do it over the second time. All along the course He suffers, suffers severely; but the suffering bursts into victories, unchecked by a single defeat. The Man of Sorrows conquers all along the line. When near the Cross He says, "I have glorified Thee on the earth; I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do." On the Cross again He cries, "It is finished!" finished not in the sense of giving it all up—disappointed, worsted, but in the sense of a complete triumph. His agony none can fathom, deepening terribly as He drew near the end; neither can be estimated properly the magnitude of the work done. We are apt to forget that He was a mighty Doer in His sufferings. Superficial observers probably saw only mere passivity, whereas the divinest and noblest energy was being exerted to the highest top of its power. The Jews considered His activity at an end after His arrest. The activity, however, continued, growing in intensity, impetus, and concentration in His death. Before the officers could take Him in Gethsemane, it was necessary that He should voluntarily perform a mighty act of self-surrender. Of all concerned in the capture Christ Himself was the greatest worker. His self-sacrifice on the occasion involved a *giving*, the activity of which made the fussy activity of the *taking* appear exceedingly small. The dignity and power of His self-surrender so overpowered His captors that they fell backward to the ground. If we follow Him from Gethsemane to Calvary, looking *into* things and not merely *on* them, we shall, as we pass on, see in the Sufferer the Conqueror, and in the Lamb of God the King of glory. At every point, all along

the line, He takes rather than is taken. In His trial before Pontius Pilate and the high priest He is condemned to die the death of a malefactor; but all the centuries since have reversed the verdict, pronouncing Him the true Winner, and branding His judges with shame and infamy. On Calvary He grappled single-handed with the prince of darkness. The Cross, however, He turned into a judgment-seat, from which He condemned sin and cast out the prince of this world. In His death He overcame, trampling under His feet the power of hell. "Having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it."

Inasmuch as we have a Captain made perfect through suffering, we are urged to follow on bravely in His steps. The lines on which the great conflict should be waged are clearly indicated in the life and death of our Leader; and we shall do well to fix our eyes on Him. His command to fight evil, in all its myriad forms, after His own example, may be taken as a certain guarantee of His presence and assistance. He is a Sender who accompanies the sent. When He commissioned His apostles to go and teach all nations, He took care to follow up the order with the great and precious promise of His constant company. "And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." They were told to abide in Jerusalem till they should be clothed with power from on high, that is to say, until Christ through His Spirit should accompany them, when they would be thoroughly equipped for the great task of regenerating a fallen world. He is still the same kind

Sender, always pledged to go with His people whithersoever they are sent. Let this inspire us with undaunted courage in our direst extremities. Well may we shudder to enter upon such a conflict, and ask not to be sent unless He go with us. The saddest sight presented to our view in Holy Writ is that of the left-hand throng moving away from Christ, in pursuance of the stern command to depart from Him. "Depart from Me." They must go *without* Him. But Christians are invited to go forth *with* Him to victory and to glory.

III. The MEANS whereby to achieve the victory.
"Overcome evil with good."

No particular specifications are found here of the arms to be employed, but their nature is distinctly pointed out. Much liberty is afforded us in the choice of our weapons, for we are only confined to the world of good; and the world of good is very large. This vast world of good is at the service of the Christian, being in a sense his armoury, full of the weapons which are "not carnal, but mighty through God for the pulling down of strongholds." From this richly stocked armoury he is allowed to select his weapons; but he is strictly forbidden to fetch any from the enemy's camp. Nor is there the slightest necessity for employing foreign arms, seeing that the best and most effective are manufactured in his own country. The world may ridicule the simple weapons of Christianity; but the Christian answers—"Thou comest to me with a sword, and with a spear, and with a shield; but I come to thee in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel

whom thou hast defied." In the opinion of the world our armour is harmless and edgeless ; sometimes in a moment of weakness we are tempted ourselves to distrust their efficacy ; still the command holds good—"Overcome evil with good." Kindness is the only instrument we are permitted to use, whether for defensive or aggressive purposes. Evil must be confronted with good. This is the return fire, and it cannot but eventually silence the enemy's guns, and that without slaying the gunners. The artillery of evil is after all poor and weak compared with the polished artillery of good.

Touching instances are afforded of the subduing efficacy of good in the history of Saul and David. "Then Saul took three thousand chosen men out of all Israel, and went to seek David and his men upon the rocks of the wild goats. And he came to the sheepcotes by the way, where was a cave ; and Saul went in to cover his feet ; and David and his men remained in the sides of the cave. And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the Lord said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good to thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily." But it is beautifully added, "And it came to pass afterwards that David's heart smote him because he had cut off Saul's skirt." "David also stayed his servants, and suffered them not to rise against Saul." When Saul learnt what David did, and especially what he did not do when he had his life in his hand, "he lifted up his voice and wept. And he said to David,

Thou art more righteous than I ; for thou hast rewarded me good, whereas I have rewarded thee evil." Saul further saw in David's noble and generous conduct a foretoken that David was to be victor in the struggle which had physical force on the one side and moral force on the other. "And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand." Another similar incident, exceedingly touching, occurred soon after. David and Abishai came to Saul's camp by night ; "and, behold, Saul lay sleeping within the trench, and his spear stuck in the ground at his bolster ; but Abner and the people lay round about him. Then said Abishai to David, God hath delivered thine enemy into thine hand this day ; now therefore let me smite him, I pray thee, with the spear even to the earth at once, and I will not smite him the second time. And David said to Abishai, Destroy him not ; but, I pray thee, take thou now the spear that is at his bolster, and the cruse of water, and let us go. So David took the spear and the cruse of water from Saul's bolster ; and they gat them away, and no man saw it, nor knew it, neither awaked, for they were all asleep." "Then David went over to the other side, and stood on the top of an hill afar off," cried to the sleeping camp, and related what he had done. "And Saul knew David's voice, and said, I have sinned ; blessed be thou, my son David ; thou shalt both do great things, and also *shalt still prevail*." Yes, goodness shall prevail. When we return good for evil, we carry away the enemy's spear, "and he returns unto his place."

The weapons here prescribed were the weapons which the Saviour Himself wielded in His terrific conflict with the kingdom of evil. He overcame with good. On one occasion the disciples, having misunderstood a certain saying of Christ, had provided two swords with a view to defend their Master's cause—only two, evidence if necessary that they were not rich in weapons of war. Driven as usual by over-zeal, Peter drew his sword, clumsily enough it must be confessed, but was promptly ordered to return it to its sheath. Instead of assisting the Master as he thought, he only gave Him additional work to heal the ear of the high priest's servant. "Put thy sword in the sheath." Up to that point He had fought evil with the highest good, and He had not lost His confidence one whit in its power; He had now no mind to adopt other measures. His infinite goodness wielded irresistible power. After the denial, Peter was melted into tears under the quiet glance of injured innocence. "He went out, and wept bitterly." A harsh rebuke would have been much more tolerable than that heart-breaking look, a look which the man of rock could not bear without bursting into audible sobs. Even the traitor felt overwhelmed by His goodness. "I have sinned in that I have betrayed innocent blood." Had he been able to recall a single wrong committed by Jesus, it would doubtless have brought him much-needed relief. In the Saviour's life and death we see the efficacy of goodness. He died for enemies, and slew the enmity of man through His cross, thus converting an enemy into a friend—the highest and completest victory imaginable.

When, in the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord Jesus commands His followers to return good for evil, He holds out before them, as an inducement, the example of their heavenly Father. "That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven; for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." God fights evil with good, and under His steady advances the powers of darkness are retreating daily. "Whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world;" and good being of God, it must prevail. Love is stronger than hatred; blessings carry in them a greater momentum than curses. Let us therefore cultivate faith in the power of good, endeavouring to live up to our faith, opposing evil in ourselves and others with true gospel weapons, which are the weapons of the highest civilisation, being in fact the very armour of light. Obedience to the text involves severe exercise, but at the same time an exceedingly healthful one. Its very difficulty should be an encouragement, since it is a notable testimony to the capabilities of the new life.

REFORM AND PARDON.

BY THE REV. R. E. MORRIS, B.A., ABERDOVEY.

"Cease to do evil : learn to do well. . . . Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord : though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."—ISA. i. 16-18.

As early then as the time of Isaiah we find the doctrine of the reformation of character dependent on forgiveness of sin distinctly taught. It might appear a little strange at first sight that it should have been put forth with so much distinctness at so early a period, and to a people who lived under a system strictly disciplinary. But upon closer examination of the circumstances of the time we shall find ample justification for it. In order to estimate rightly the demand made here for reform in character and the offer of forgiveness held out to effect it, we must bear in mind the distinction between the Mosaic dispensation as rightly understood by faithful Israelites, and the same as misunderstood by the bulk of the chosen people in Isaiah's time. In the former case there was no need for the demand for reform nor the promise of forgiveness. The system under which they lived, so long as they continued faithful to it, ensured the one and provided the other. Not that the best of

them did not sin. Nay, they sinned often. But the true Israelite knew also how to repent. The faith he had in the covenant was counted unto him for righteousness, and he was truly absolved in virtue of the death of Him whom the Sacrifices he offered for his sin typified. It is to be observed that we admit no essential difference between the old dispensation and the new. God's remedy for sin is one; it is the same in all ages. More prominence perhaps was given to the observance of the law in the former, but not to the exclusion of grace; while in the latter grace appears the more prominent, but surely not to the exclusion of law. Neither in the one nor in the other, we think, was the law the condition of life. Both represent rather two different stages in the same covenant of grace—the one preparatory to the other. Whatever of repentance, faith, pardon, hope, or love may be found in the latter are found in the former, though probably conceived of somewhat differently. These were realities to them, the substance of their religion, as much as they are to us. To the "Israelites indeed," therefore, the words of our text could have no meaning except in a secondary sense. To whom then were they addressed? To those "who were of Israel, but were not Israel;" to those who had broken away from the theocracy, and had set up a system of their own invention. This system in later times came to be known as Judaism, which is the Mosaic dispensation misconstrued and perverted. It was against these that the terrible indictment contained in this chapter was directed. And as St. Paul exposed the error of Judaism as a full-grown system, so Isaiah

denounces the same error in its infancy in his time. Now in so far as the chosen people had forsaken the ancient covenant and rebelled against Jehovah, and had assumed a power, which indeed they did not possess, viz., a power to seek righteousness in the law, they inevitably placed themselves in the same position as the rest of the world. This is expressly stated by St. Paul when he spoke of this very class. "For we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." As humanised in Judaism, we hope to show further on, how utterly the dispensation of law failed in producing a reformation of character.

The demand, then, for a reformation of character, dependent upon the forgiveness of sin, is the subject before us. We may take the two parts of the subject as they stand :

I. The demand made.

II. How to meet it.

I. The demand here made.

1. The nature of the demand. It is for a reformation of practice. "Wash ye, make you clean; put away the evil of your works from before Mine eyes. Cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek out justice, reclaim the oppressor, do justice to the orphan, plead for the widow." Put in one word, it is—Reform. This is the one Divine call to fallen man. In it everything is summed up. Made in sundry times and in divers manners, it ever remains substantially the same. Now it is a call to repent unto the forgiveness of sin, or to seek the Lord while He may be found, and to forsake

all wicked ways and thoughts; now it is an exhortation to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, or to love God and keep His commandments. At one time it is an old commandment, at another a new one. Whether it be faith or love, hope or patience, that are enjoined, they are all to issue in the moral elevation of man's character.

The essence of moral beauty is goodness. Now goodness is not a quality deposited in the heart and there shut up; nor yet a something to put on as a garment at will. Rather it is the fruit of well-doing—the outgrowth of a righteous life. This is what God requires. He means to fill the earth with moral beauty, and thus make it one with heaven. This is to be the outcome of His redeeming love, His pardon and His grace. But it cannot be accomplished without the co-operating activity of the human will. “Work out,” says St. Paul, “your own salvation with fear and trembling.” It is to work that he calls us. He does not say, Follow after knowledge, pursue culture, cherish zeal for religious observances; but, Be zealous of good works; put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ. While the hands are besmeared with blood—the token of an immoral life—all natural refinements are of very little value in His sight. God is forbearing, and even indulgent in some things; but He is uncompromising here. Christ does not say, Be as perfect as you can; but, “Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” He does not say, Be ye happy; but over the good man he pronounces happiness. Our greatest happiness is to do good. By doing good we shall find the highest good. This then is the great lesson

of life—"Cease to do evil; learn to do well." At first only is the task, like all other tasks, difficult; but to continue to learn this lesson, which we have begun here on earth, shall constitute our blessedness for ever in heaven.

2. Now the word "learn" suggests a further thought, namely, the ground of this demand for reform. If we were correct in laying the greatest stress upon the activity of the human will in the work of learning to do well, we shall surely be justified in ascribing the ground of this demand to the perversity of that will.

Man is evil, and does evil. "He hath corrupted his way upon the earth." However some men may try to smooth this over and explain it away, the truth remains. Need we ask any one whether it is so or not? To the fact—the simple fact—need we even the witness of Scripture? Nay; we know it in ourselves. And what have the best of pagans said, and what do the best of Christians say, of their own heart? In substance, what the Book of God says—"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?" Even those who take the most sanguine and enthusiastic view of human nature admit as much as this; namely, that there is something wrong in man's moral condition. But if the Bible and conscience are confessedly right as to the one part, why should we not believe that they are right as to the whole of what they declare on the subject? The reality and the enormity of the evil which is in the world are but too well attested by the terrible retribution it brings upon individuals and society. And this is universal, and true of all times. Compare, for example, the picture which Isaiah has drawn of rebellious Israel

in his day with any fair representation of modern society. How well they accord! The prophet might have been describing a squalid London or Liverpool. Surely the great weight of guilt with all its consequences, which man has to bear, and the wounds and bruises and putrefying sores of society, are not without some adequate cause.

3. To estimate rightly, however, this cause, we must consider the justice of the demand. It is God who makes it. But He could not have made it unless it were just to do so; nor would He have made it unless it were possible for man to meet it. The first thought suggests the only explanation possible of the perversity of the human will, and the moral degradation of the world. Were man essentially of the world and for the world, there could be no perversity or evil in him. He would be in harmony with, and perfectly happy in, his present environments. He would only be an unit of the great world which is ever revolving and ever passing away into nothingness. In this sense man would be a part of the brute creation, at once indeed the highest, the worst, and the most miserable of all the beasts that perish.

But let the world and the things which are in it perish, we believe that there is a world of mind within this—the world of mind, of will, and of conscience—the world of mankind—which will not pass away, at least in the sense that the irrational creation will pass away. This God made for Himself; and though it has broken away from the rest of His kingdom, and has assumed a kind of independence—a will of its own, and has made the material world of sense the sphere of its action and the

instrument of its pleasure, yet He retains His claim upon it. He has ever asserted His right in it, and continues always to speak to it, more or less distinctly, through its conscience. It is the denial of His right, the setting at nought of His claim, and the turning a deaf ear to His voice, that constitute the perversity of the human will, thus filling the world with evil, vice, and misery.

II. We have suggested the remark that God would not have made the demand for reform unless it were possible for man to meet it. This will lead us to the second part of our subject, viz., How to meet God's demand for reform.

If we have rightly understood the nature, the ground, and the justice of the demand, then indeed we may ask with reason, Where is the power to meet it to come from? Two answers only are possible: either it is inherent in man—this is the answer of nature; or it is supplied from without—this is the answer of grace. The former is the basis of all the human efforts which have been or are being put forth to reform the world; the latter is the basis of the Divine method. Let us see what success has attended—

I. The answer of Nature.

Now the belief in the ability of man to reform himself is founded either on ignorance of the real nature of his moral condition, as was the case in the pagan world, or on a deliberate refusal to recognise the truth when it is presented concerning that condition, as was the case in Judaism, and is the case at the present day with those

who persuade themselves to a belief in the infinite intrinsic capability of human nature. Though now "the light is shining," such is the pride of man, that he is ever slow to admit his own weakness, ever loth to take God's answer instead of his own. No, says the modern enthusiast: I regret the new light, for the demands it makes upon me are far too humiliating; I much prefer the method of the ancients, as being more natural and manly; I see no reason why a man, given the necessary favourable environments,—which happily are in a fair way to be supplied,—should not, by a little effort, become perfectly good; why he should not so live as to be able to defy every law in heaven and on earth.

Is any one really justified by history or by experience in taking such a view of the question? Neither the religion of the pagan world, nor the philosophy of the Greeks, nor the power and civilisation of the Romans—of their religion we say nothing, for it was unworthy of the name—afford much ground for this belief in human nature.

Splendid as were the intellectual gifts of the Greeks, and noble as were some of their natural virtues, it does not appear that they arose superior to the rest of the pagan world in their moral condition. Rich in political and social reforms, they were wofully deficient in moral reforms. Their philosophers were busy enough theorising on the moral estate of man; and they succeeded marvellously in prescribing rules of conduct. Indeed, we hardly need better codes of morality than are furnished us by them. Their fault was, that they were intended only for a few; and, in most cases, for those

few only on parchment. It was not seriously expected that any one should put them into practice. They thus knew their duty, but knew not how to do it. They clearly betray a serious lack of power to stimulate them to the performance of duty. Their strongest incentive to action was the knowledge that what they conceived of as duty was founded on an eternal order of things. But this could never inspire them much. And while individuals might be named from amongst them who were as good as they were great, it is an established fact that no class or group of good men was found amongst them. Wisdom then, under the most favourable circumstances, has failed to supply the necessary power to reform the world.

Nor does Rome at its best encourage this sanguine belief in human nature. Its high civilisation and its remarkable legislation could not change the character of the community. The former was only the whitewash daubed over the sepulchres of immorality, serving too often only to make vileness appear respectable, while the latter only repressed outward breaches of the peace. One of their own poets as witness :—

“ Whom do we count a good man ? whom but he
 Who keeps the laws and statutes of the Senate,
 Who judges in great suits and controversies,
 Whose witness and opinion win the cause ?
 But his own house, and the whole neighbourhood,
 See his foul inside through the whited skin. * ”

No, neither the enactments of a Roman senate, nor the Acts of a modern Parliament, nor any power of law, can

* Homer.

make man good or even moral. Justice by itself, no more than wisdom, can remove the evil.

But nowhere is the inadequacy of wisdom and of law, to draw forth the power, which, it is contended, there is in man to reform his own character, better illustrated than in the case of the chosen people of Israel. They could boast of a wisdom more divine than that of the Greeks, a system of law superior to that of the Romans; while in virtue of their peculiar privileges as a nation they were in an incomparably more advantageous position than any other people, to succeed in their own strength, since they had a will to it. We now refer to the bulk of the people in the time of Isaiah, whom we have described before as having broken off from the Divine order as laid down by the Lawgiver and Founder of the theocracy, and as having rebelled against Jehovah by setting up a system of their own, a system of human merit. In this they took the law into their own hands, and explained it as they wished; and for any delinquency, which was not of much consequence, they could atone most conveniently, by multiplying tenfold and more, if necessary, the sacrifices and offerings, and by calling feast days and holy convocations.

The whole system, indeed, wore a somewhat plausible, if not an imposing, appearance; but beneath the surface was the accumulation of guilt and a steady moral decay. The very possession of their superior privileges, when they abused them, brought upon them a severer punishment. Was ever a people charged with a more serious indictment, and that by the mouth of the greatest of their own prophets? In the opening sentence they are

made to compare unfavourably with the beasts that perish. "The ox knoweth its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but as for Israel—men, My own, whom I brought up and nurtured with so much tenderness—they have become without knowledge and without heart." And a little further on Jehovah utters these dismal sentences: "Why should ye be stricken any more? Ye will revolt more and more; the whole head is sick and the whole heart faint."

The Mosaic law then by itself could not any more than the Roman law awaken in man a power which would enable him to become righteous. "In that it was weak through the flesh." Nay, when the law as a disciplinary system failed to make men better through its chastisements, it even made worse those who broke away from it as such, by the penalties it inflicted upon them. The heavy retribution they suffered both in their persons and their property, incapacitated them more and more to rouse themselves to their duty. Then the effect of punishment, when it is penal, is to demoralise and lead to recklessness. "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more."

We conclude then that the witness of history and of experience little encourages a strong belief in the capability of human nature to reform itself; and if we reflect upon what the demand for reform really implies, we shall find an adequate reason for this.

2. The answer of grace. A power from without is absolutely necessary to enable man to meet the demand for reform. This power is God's forgiveness. "Come

now" (the particle "now" is not temporal here; it means "indeed," "pray"), "let us reason together," or better, "let us end the dispute;" "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Although the demand precedes the offer of forgiveness, we are not to suppose that the work of reforming is to precede the enjoyment of the divine gift. That indeed were impossible. The demand is stated first in order to invite our attention to the special duty we are called upon to perform; but simultaneously we are invited to contemplate the divine settlement of the dispute by the offer of pardon on God's side; and this assurance of pardon awakens within us a desire, and imparts to us a prayer, to do our duty; in a word, to reform. This then is the appropriate gift for this task, or rather, we ought to say, this is the particular form in which the fulness of divine love is given for this special work. As every duty of man is summed up in the command to reform, so all the riches of grace are summed up in the gift of pardon. We quoted before the words "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling," as showing the necessity of human activity. We may now quote the reason assigned for this injunction, as pointing out the encouragement to be had in the divine co-operation—"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure."

But what peculiar virtue or power does pardon possess for producing a change of life?

(1.) It is an inducement to repentance, which is the first step in the reformation of character.

The essence of repentance is a change of mind. This change must arise out of a deep conviction of sin; and it implies that he who is so convicted, has been brought to understand the moral relation between God and the world. Sin has not become a great evil in his sight, and to his conscience, unless it is conceived of as an opposition to God; but when such a conviction has issued in a true change of mind, then, indeed, sin in all its heinousness is seen in its true light, and this will be followed by a desire to be delivered from it. Now pardon is the very strongest inducement to man to take this initiatory step towards reform, for it alone has the possibility of the deliverance which is sought. "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts." What is the inducement? "Our God will have mercy upon him, and will abundantly pardon." The thief's prayer on the cross was doubtless inspired by the Saviour's prayer for forgiveness on behalf of His crucifiers.

But the change of mind in true repentance leads invariably to a change of life. Important, indeed, is the function of pardon in this transition from mind to action. First it induces the resolution to reform, then becomes a power in the penitent man to help him to carry out his resolution. Pardon thus bridges the chasm which exists between a knowledge of duty and the doing of it. Many, we believe, are convicted of sin, and even repent, but stop there. A belief in the divine forgiveness, moreover, would lead them on to the sphere of actual reform. As pardon soothes the troubled mind under conviction of sin so it stimulates the perverse will to good action,

and supplies the heart with a sufficiently strong motive power to all well-doing.

(2.) Another function of pardon, and perhaps the most important of all in the reformation of character, is that it removes, or rather is itself, as its name implies, the removal of sin. The scarlet shall become as snow, the crimson as wool. The figure is suggestive, being the colour of blood, and blood the emblem of crime, while wool and snow are the emblems of purity. To divest the language of its figures, it seems to mean that pardon will convert the criminal into a saint; this is its function. The pagan world knew nothing of this, and yet it is the only power to convert mankind. Where wisdom, justice, and law failed, pardon succeeds. "What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sent His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin condemned sin in the flesh."

Reform had become impossible under the law, not only because of sin itself, but also because of the demoralising effects of the punishment of the law inflicted for sin. But God's own Son in the flesh went to the root of the evil; He condemned sin in the flesh.

"He died for our transgressions to atone."

Pardon is the result of His atoning sacrifice. "Who is our redemption unto the remission of sin." All the power and wisdom of God have been at work in producing this gift of pardon, and all the virtues of Christ's death have gone to constitute it: hence it is "the power of God unto salvation."

Pardon then cannot be charged with being something

arbitrary. The case is not as though God in love were able to overrule the claims of justice and dispense at will with the righteous penalties of a law transgressed. On the contrary, the doctrine of pardon as a power to reform the world is the only one which recognises the fact that man is a sinner and that God is infinitely just. God alone knows the depths of sin: but even we may see something of its meaning in the mirror of the atonement and the necessity for pardon. Now when sin itself is removed in forgiveness, all its consequences, too, will soon vanish: and, lightened of our burden, we shall feel free and ready to undertake the duties of the new life. How could we command the energy to do them while we were

"From scalp to sole one slough and crust of sin,
Unfit for earth, unfit for heaven? Scarce meet
For troops of devils, mad with blasphemy."*

But now we are delivered from the law, having died unto that wherein we were held, so that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter. Being delivered from

"... those lead-like tons of sin that crushed
The spirit flat before Thee,"†

our hearts begin to beat new life; our drooping souls revive; we will now undertake cheerfully to master the grand lesson, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well."

* Tennyson.

† Ibid.

THE UNION BETWEEN CHRIST AND HIS PEOPLE.

BY THE REV. J. REES OWEN, PEMBROKE.

“Without Me ye can do nothing.”—JOHN xv. 5.

THE Lord Jesus in the first part of this verse sets forth the union and communion between Him and His people, by comparing them to the vital connection between the vine and its branches: “I am the Vine, ye are the branches.” He then shows the signal benefit which flows from abiding in Him: “He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.” “He that abideth in Me”—in dependence upon Me, in communion with Me, cleaving unto Me—“and I in him,” by My word, My grace, and My Spirit, “the same bringeth forth much fruit.” This is the excellent result of the abiding, bringing forth much fruit. It is clearly indicated in the words of Scripture what this fruit is: “Ye have your fruit unto holiness,” affirms Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. “Being fruitful in every good work,” says he in writing to the Colossians. In his Epistle to the Galatians he specifies in detail the fruits: “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.” “*Much* fruit.” Not scanty is the fruit on those who

abide in Christ, but fruit abounding, a plenteous harvest. Fruitful in all circumstances, however unpropitious they may be—in exile, as John in the isle of Patmos; in persecutions, as Peter; in stripes, in imprisonments, as Paul; yea, in the cruel and painful death of the martyr, as Stephen. In every state fruitful.

In the words of the text the Lord Jesus impresses the truth that He is the spring of all good in us: "Without Me ye can do nothing." Union with Christ is the root and source of any and every good in us: without Him—separated from Him—we can do nothing aright, nothing truly good, nothing that will be fruit acceptable to God or profitable to ourselves: "From Me is thy fruit found." We depend on Christ as the branch on the root for sap. If the branch be severed from the vine, so that the sap of the vine flows not into it, it cannot bear fruit; yea, it will wither and decay and be fit for nothing but to be burned. So apart from Christ, severed from Him, we are nothing; and we can do nothing, no real, lasting work; yea, soon we shall be fit for nothing but to be cast into the fire. This is the truth I wish to dwell upon.

I. Apart from Christ there is no merit for our acceptance with God.

II. Apart from Christ we can do nothing to overcome the power of indwelling sin.

III. Apart from Christ we can do nothing to build up a Christian character.

IV. Apart from Christ we can do nothing to promote the true interests of others.

I. Apart from Christ there is no merit for our acceptance with God. Nothing is more clearly taught in the Scriptures than that no man in himself is righteous before God. "There is none righteous, no, not one." "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." It is no less clearly taught that no man can make himself righteous—no one of himself can attain to the righteousness which is necessary for his acceptance with God. "By the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight." But in Christ there is all-sufficient merit. Believing, trusting in Him, we are justified and accepted. "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." In Him we are freed from the judgment pronounced upon us; the sentence is removed from our persons: "There is now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." And in and through Him we are brought into the favour and approval of the Father: "Accepted in the Beloved." Not through His merit together with what we ourselves can do. No; we can do nothing to deserve the approval of the Most High: "By grace are ye saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God." His biographer, describing the crisis of Dr. Chalmers' life which resulted in his spiritual birth, affirms that, when awakened to his condition as a sinner before God, and to the high requirements of the Divine law, he for a time "repaired to the atonement to eke out his deficiencies, and as the ground of assurance that God would look upon him with a propitious eye." But the conviction was at length "wrought in him that he had been attempting an impossibility . . . that it must be either on his own

merits wholly, or on Christ's merits wholly, that he must lean: and that, by introducing to any extent his own righteousness into the ground of his meritorious acceptance with God, 'he had been inserting a flaw, he had been importing a falsehood into the very principle of his justification.' " Have I not to do something, some little, myself to merit eternal life? No, my soul, there is nothing for thee but to rely upon the infinite merit of the Saviour. How many there are who delay to seek peace with God, thinking to make themselves a little better, more fit to come to Him, and more acceptable in His sight! Thou canst never make thyself better; sink deeper and deeper in sin thou wilt every hour. Come as thou art, with all the burden of thy sins upon thee. There is nothing for life but Jesus Christ crucified. Trust in Him. "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." The purest, holiest saints, after spending their lives in the service of the great Master, feel that their only plea for acceptance with God is the merit of the Redeemer. "I have nothing," said the eminent minister John Jones, Talsarn, a little before his death; "I have nothing: my sermons are nothing. All that I had is gone out of sight." Such was the experience of that devoted servant of God at the close of his life. Apart from Christ there is no merit.

II. Apart from Christ we can do nothing to overcome the power of indwelling sin.

The evil propensities within us are not the same in

each one; it is not the same sin that doth so easily beset all; it may be the love of money or the lust of power in one, vanity or pride, malice or guile, in another. Even in believers these corrupt tendencies are not completely subdued. You feel their power often, and strive against them again and again. Sometimes you are ready to think that you have obtained the victory over them, and have been released from their grievous thralldom, but after a while you find that they are as powerful as ever. Does not the Christian have frequent experience that the corruption of his heart is too strong for him? He made good resolutions, and broke them: he determined to overcome the lust, and fell a victim to it. After repeated failures he is driven almost to despair, and is ready to ask, Can my corruptions ever be conquered, or must I become more and more their slave? By our own unaided strength they can never be overcome; they are too strong and stubborn for us. Without Christ—severed from Him we cannot prevail against them: there will be no real mortification of sin except we experience in ourselves the virtue of Christ's precious blood. But if we be brought by Divine grace to cleave in faith to the Saviour, we shall have His Spirit to dwell in us, and in His strength we shall be enabled to prevail against all the evil tendencies of our hearts. Paul in his conflict with his inward corruption cried out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" But he knew where to turn for deliverance: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Apart from Christ we cannot be rid of the evil in our hearts, but His blood can wash away

the vilest sins. In the fables of ancient bards we read that one of the great labours imposed upon Hercules was to cleanse the foul Augean Stable. This mighty task he accomplished by turning the river Alpheus through it, thus performing with ease what before had appeared impossible. That stable is a true picture of the heart defiled by countless sins. The streams of that fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, turned by a living faith to flow into it, alone can cleanse it. It is impossible for us with all our efforts to remove the pollution, but this will be done effectually by the precious stream of the Redeemer's blood.

"Sinners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

Severed from Christ we shall never obtain deliverance from indwelling sin.

III. Apart from Christ we can do nothing to build up a Christian character.

Character may be regarded as a building. Now, in a building there is not only a foundation, but also a superstructure. It is of supreme importance for us to have the right foundation laid, to have "repentance from dead works and faith toward God," as the foundation principles of our character. We are not, however, to be always laying the foundation, but to go on and build upon it. We are not to rest satisfied with the first elements, but to go forward to perfection; there is a progress to be in our religion, a gradual building up

of Christian character with true, sound, lasting principles. The Christian is engaged through life in this work, and it is only in humble dependence upon the Saviour that he can do it wisely and well. Apart from Christ he cannot build aright.

Or, again, Christian character may be likened unto a tree growing; it is to unfold, and gain strength as a vigorous sapling. "Giving all diligence," says the Apostle Peter, "add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity." Here is a noble, well-developed growth: a beautiful, symmetrical character, with no flaw or defect in it. But these spiritual graces will not appear in our lives if we do not abide in constant communion with Christ. The stronger the flow of the sap from the root into the branch the more fruit it bears, so the closer our fellowship with the Saviour the more will our graces thrive and grow. It is related of the saintly young minister, Robert M'Cheyne, that, when he settled in Dundee, the town soon began to feel that they had a peculiar man of God in the midst of them. Dr. Bonar, in writing the story of his life, reveals the true cause of this. "The walls of his chamber," says he, "were witnesses of his prayerfulness and of his tears as well as of his cries." "The real secret of his soul's prosperity was the daily enlargement of his heart in fellowship with his God."

In steadfast cleaving unto the Redeemer, and by the rich indwelling of His Spirit in us, the Christian graces

and virtues will come more and more clearly to sight in our life. Apart from Him, whatever seeming strength, whatever loveliness, whatever glory we may have, will soon vanish and pass away.

IV. Apart from Christ we can do nothing to promote the true interests of others.

Whatever has conduced to the real welfare of men in every age has been achieved by those who had the Spirit of Christ in them. What are all the provisions for *the alleviating and removing of the wants and sufferings* of men—the hospitals, orphanages, almshouses, and other philanthropic institutions—but the results of Christian effort, the products of the Christian spirit? All noble enduring *legislative acts* also, such as that for the emancipation of the slaves, carried by the instrumentality of Wilberforce and others, have been brought about by men under the influence of the religion of Jesus Christ. Who likewise have filled Wales and other countries with the *Gospel*? Is it not men with the love of Christ as a holy fire burning within them? It is the constraining power of His love shed abroad in their hearts that has impelled men to leave their home and country, to sacrifice their possessions and comforts, yea, their very lives, to make others partaker of eternal salvation. What but this induced Henry Martyn, with such brilliant prospects opening before him at home, to give up all in order to toil in heathen countries? See him struggling on in the greatest privation and suffering, and at the early age of thirty-one dying in a foreign land in utter loneliness, without friend or relative near to

soothe or succour him. What was it that constrained him to the sacrifice? The love of Christ. Macaulay's lines of him are true:

"For that dear Name,
Through every form of danger, death, and shame,
Onward he journeyed to a happier shore,
Where danger, death, and shame are known no more."

The love of Christ is the only incentive strong enough. We shall do nothing effectually for the spiritual and eternal interests of others if we have not realised the preciousness of the Redeemer and the constraining power of His love. Apart from Him we can do nothing.

But how weak and feeble soever we are in ourselves, trusting in Jesus we can do great things. Paul regarded himself as "less than the least of all saints," and yet, in the strength of Christ, he felt that there was nothing too difficult for him to accomplish: "I can do all things," says he, "through Christ which strengtheneth me." If we likewise "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might," difficulties cannot stand before us. Let us "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Then shall we be more than conquerors through Him that loved us.

Do we feel the worth of Jesus? May the Spirit reveal Him in His preciousness to our hearts, and bring us all to put our trust in Him. Without Christ we cannot live aright, and without Him we cannot die aright.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF RICHES.

BY T. REV. JOHN HUGHES, M.A., MACHYNLLETH.

"He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word ; and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful."—MATT. xiii. 22.

OUR Lord Jesus Christ often in His public ministry rebukes the worldliness of the human heart. Nor is there any sin condemned by him more severely than covetousness or the love of money. We can easily understand from the Gospels that he placed this sin in the front of His preaching, evermore reminding men, through solemn warnings and plain-spoken parables, of their danger from the cares of this life and its delusions to forget God, and thus to imperil the salvation of their souls.

We can justly infer, from the marked place which this sin had in the teaching and ministry of our Saviour, that it was one of the public and crying sins of that age and country. His indignation burns against it, with no diminished zeal, through the whole of His public life, and His condemnation sounds, like the blast of a trumpet, through the whole of the four Gospels. So great was this pestilence amongst the Jews, that even His own disciples had caught the infection ; now and again it breaks forth in worldly views of their Master's kingdom,

and a vain unworthy ambition for the place of honour and wealth therein. They persistently hope even against hope that their discipleship will be a gain to them in an earthly sense, and that theirs will be the honours and emoluments of the Messiah's temporal reign. For a great part of their public life their great question was: "Behold, we have forsaken all and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?" We are not to suppose that this is a question of "other-worldliness," so contemptible in the eyes of many who are wise in their generation now-a-days; no, it is a question of this-worldliness, asked by honest fishermen, who had recently abandoned their nets for the hopes of discipleship, and whose imagination carried them forward into scenes of future greatness and wealth. More than once they broke forth into strife about their several positions in the approaching kingdom; they set to dividing the sweets of office amongst themselves, one in everything except upon the question who was to have the lion's share; they could not agree who was to be accounted the greatest: "There was strife among them which of them should be accounted the greatest." These worldly views of the Messiah's kingdom constantly sprouted forth, in spite of their Divine Master's heavenly life and spiritual teaching. He took a long time to disinfect them from the plague. Nor was it until they saw their Lord ascend from the brow of Olivet to the right hand of God that they were entirely emancipated from their worldly ambitions, and made fit to be sent forth to the world as the apostles of a spiritual kingdom.

One, indeed, of the apostles, remained under the ban

of worldliness, loved the reward of unrighteousness, and became the son of perdition. It is a solemn warning to Christians in all generations, that covetousness obstinately persevered in its dominion over Judas. Notwithstanding the example and warnings of his blessed Lord, this sin became the cruel master of his soul, and the cause of his terrible fall. It seems as if Almighty God had been pleased to bring out before the eyes of mankind, by the most startling example possible, the fearful guilt of this sin, by placing it in immediate conflict with the most precious of His gifts, His own dear Son. The discipleship and fall of Judas is one of the saddest tragedies the world has ever known, and it should ever be a warning against covetousness and the love of money.

Furthermore, another inference may be drawn from the attention which our Lord gives to this sin in His teaching,—and the parable of the sower tends to strengthen the conclusion,—that it was the chief hindrance to the due success of our Saviour's ministry. Why was not Christ's ministry more effective in the conversion of the Jews? Why was the most active, loving, solemn ministry which the world has ever known, so unfruitful in visible results, so barren in souls? What was the chief reason why the Son of God Himself failed to convert His own nation? You will find an answer in the parable of the sower, and more especially in the words of my text. "The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." Read the history of those times, and you will find how easy it was for any impostor and false Messiah to convert the Jews

to His teaching, provided he promised them riches and worldly renown. A Messiah that ministered to their covetousness, and pampered their worldliness, might easily succeed with them; but to believe and follow an indigent Messiah, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, poorer than the fowls of the air and the foxes of the field, one who had nothing of this world to promise and give away—this was too much for a covetous and money-loving people. Mammon was their god; at his shrine they worshipped. The fall of the Jews is another remarkable event in history, which rebukes the spirit of worldliness. Though they were blessed with privileges above any other race, and received at last the culmination of all blessings in the life and ministry of the Son of Man, it was owing to their covetousness and worldliness that they miscarried and fell under the stroke of Divine vengeance. And to this day, scattered and homeless as they are among the nations of the earth, they are known as a covetous, money-loving and money-making people.

In the words of the text, therefore, our Lord Jesus directs our attention to the deceitfulness of riches as a power that blinds man to his spiritual interests, and prevents the good seed of the word from bringing forth fruit to eternal life. *The deceitfulness of riches and our danger therefrom* is the subject, therefore, which I wish to enlarge upon from the words of my text.

By the deceitfulness of riches is meant the power which wealth and the good things of this world have of deceiving the mind and leading the heart astray from God as its highest good; that charm whereby it capti-

vates the imagination, deludes the understanding, and prostrates the heart of sinful man entirely to itself as the chief object of his desires and the great purpose of his life; its power of absorbing our whole attention, and so filling our hearts and minds with thoughts and imaginations concerning it, as to choke every other thought, and wipe away every impression derived from spiritual things. It is not in riches in themselves that this power for evil exists, but in riches as a part of the world wherein sinful man lives. There is in these words of our Saviour, "the deceitfulness of riches," evidently a figure of speech, which transfers to the thing a quality of the mind to which they are related. And in this relation to man's moral life, riches are looked upon not merely as things, but as something which partakes of personal qualities—quick, living, active to lead man astray from duty and from God. The words, therefore, denote not what riches are in themselves, but what they become in consequence of the sinfulness of the human heart.

The causes of this deceitfulness are twofold. The power of Satan as the god of this world, and the natural depravity and ungodliness of the human heart.

As to the first of these our knowledge is very limited. We know not how far Satan, as the prince of this world, can so exercise his dominion over the things of sense as to use them as powers of evil upon the thoughts and imaginations of men. We have no means of determining how far he can infuse himself, as a spirit of deceitfulness, into the riches and honour and glory of this world, and thus use them as his instruments to lead poor sinners captive according to his own will. We know not how

far he can exercise this power; but there seems little place to doubt, from the teaching of Holy Scripture, that he has this power. He is called "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience;" he is said to have some power upon the course of this world. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." These are profound words, and I cannot pretend to fathom them, but it is plain that they speak of the kingdom of Satan in a twofold aspect—in its external relation to the material world, and as an inward energising power in the children of disobedience. As the prince of the power of the air, he exercises, subject to the sovereignty of God, a certain power upon the material elements of the world, and he worketh also, as the spirit of evil, in the children of disobedience. The account of our Lord's temptation seems to be conclusive upon this point. We are there told that "the devil taketh Him up to an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them." He appears as the prince of this world, causing the wealth and honour and glory thereof to pass before the Saviour's mind, in order to tempt Him out of the straight line of duty which had been marked out to Him by God the Father. And we may naturally suppose that the evil one brought up the rear of his temptations by the deceitfulness of riches and the pomp and vanity of this world, not without some amount of confidence

that he would hereby possibly overcome the Holy One. He had seen the wise, the great, and the mighty of the sons of men bow down to him in exchange for these things; and would not Jesus of Nazareth also be led astray by this selfsame delusion? But the strong man armed was then face to face with one stronger than he! This passage of Scripture, therefore, together with many others that could be adduced, teach plainly that the Evil One has a power in this world, which he exercises as the spirit of darkness both upon the things of this world and upon the minds of men.

Then another cause of the deceitfulness of riches is the natural depravity and corruption of the human heart. This exists even in those who have been delivered from under the dominion of Satan, and is a fruitful cause of worldliness in the people of God. Our own experience will teach us how far this is an active principle in the mind. How often are believers led away into covetousness and forgetfulness of God! How often are our hearts secularised by the cares of this world, and how often do they kiss the idols of Mammon! The heart is deceitful above all things, ever departing from the living God. These then are the twofold causes of the marvellous power that riches have upon men to harden their hearts and to choke the seed of the Word.

A very hasty glance at the present age is enough to assure our minds that it is an age which is overmuch under the power of the deceitfulness of riches; it is through this delusion that the wicked one worketh in the children of disobedience. There never was an age, we believe, more enslaved by the deceitfulness of riches

than the present one. Let us note some of the signs of this miserable servitude to the idol of money.

Let us ask, then, in the first place, what is the great purpose of life with the multitude? It is the making of money, the amassing of wealth. It has never occurred to the minds of a great majority that life has any other purpose; nor do they consider it worth living for any other. *To be or not to be rich*—this is the question with the many in these days. And whoever makes money, and increases in riches, people describe as one *that does well*. Now what is the meaning of this phrase in common parlance? Does it mean that a man devotes himself to the great purpose of life—the glory of God and the good of his fellow-men? or does it describe him who for his conspicuous virtue, and distinguished among his fellows *for the art of doing good*, approximates daily by constant effort and self-denial to that perfect ideal of life set before us by the apostle in his compressed and beautiful description of the Saviour as one “who went about doing good?” It means nothing of the kind; far from it. It means nothing more nor less than that a man is successful in amassing wealth and heaping up riches; he may fall short of the popular estimate of a just and a good man, but if he is making money and growing rich his neighbours talk of him as doing well. This popular language indicates how far the deceitfulness of riches tells upon the people’s standard of good. The highest good, the *summum bonum*, was a great question with ancient philosophers; but judging from this phrase, people in these days have made up their minds with admirable complacency that it must

be, if not wealth itself, at least its twin brother. Such is the power of riches that we too often bless the covetous, "whom the Lord abhorreth."

And this undue value placed upon wealth, this spirit of covetousness which is so prevalent in our age, has formed, we have reason to fear, a system of commercial morality which is altogether out of keeping with the morality of the Ten Commandments and of the New Testament. Trade is carried on in many an instance on very questionable principles, and travels often along a broad gauge, greatly divergent from the straight path and the narrow way of the Gospel. We are apprehensive that things are done in trade among this Christian nation, and by many that call themselves Christians, that would be revolting to the conscience of many an enlightened pagan. The axiom of free trade, the commercial gospel of the age—"to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market"—has to a certain extent, we fear, corrupted the moral sense of the community, and, by a process of moral crystallisation, has become hardened down into a principle of unfair, if not dishonest, trade between individuals.

I do not in this place make any assertion with reference to the principle of free trade among nations. It is not a question to be handled from the pulpit, nor can it be dovetailed with any propriety into the alcoves of the sanctuary. But, to prevent any misapprehension, I ought to say that I do not wish to raise in your minds any doubts as to the validity of this great principle of our national and commercial life. I believe it to be the law of Providence to the nations of the world, that the super-

abundance of one country should freely circulate to make up for the scarcity and penury of another. As an international principle, regulating the life of nations, it is not liable to the same abuse, and is subject to certain restraints which do not come into operation when it is adopted as the principle of individual morality. When individuals act upon the principle of free trade as stated in its fundamental axiom, when they adopt it as the principle of their dealings with their fellow-men, when they give as little as possible with their selling hand, and take as much as they can possibly ask or have with the other, they are certainly coming very near transgressing the eighth commandment, and are within measurable distance of taking unjustly what is not their own. Free trade, as a principle of individual and social morality, must be keenly watched by an enlightened and quick conscience, thoroughly alive to the morality of the Ten Commandments; otherwise it degenerates into unfairness and injustice, and justifies a man in his unlawful attempts to overreach his poorer neighbour. Let the principle of free trade be imbued with the morality of the Ten Commandments, let it be electrified by a current of that divine morality which was given to mankind from the stormy summit of Sinai, and it can be enshrined in the heart of the nation as a principle of social and individual morality, and thus it will preserve trade untrammelled and undefiled. But divorced from this, as it too often is, it erects avarice into a principle, and like a worm undermines that righteousness which alone can exalt a nation. "He that maketh haste to be rich," saith the wise man, "shall not be innocent," and "hath an evil eye;" and

such is the inordinate desire that many have of amassing wealth, so great is their haste to become rich, that their eye cannot be pure nor their heart innocent. So eager are men in the race for gold, that righteousness and justice and fair dealing are down-trodden in the streets. "Make money," is the motto of a vast number in this Christian land; "honestly if you can, but make it anyhow."

Then note, in the next place, as another sign of the deceitfulness of riches and its power upon the age, how apt men are to give to the possession of wealth a far too important place in their estimate of respectability. What kind of society is meant by a great majority of men when they speak of and commend one another to "a respectable society?" Is it that society that deepens devotion to the highest interests of man's life in the world; that makes him a stronger and a better man, that lifts him to a higher sphere of moral and spiritual life, and strengthens his consecration to duty and to God? Would that it were. But it is far different. It is a society that can make a good appearance in this world, whose life is entirely dominated in too many instances by vanity and outside show. It is a society in many a case where wealth accumulates, though love and morality and justice decay. And many Christian parents have endangered the salvation of their children by opening the door of such society too wide before them. The honest, virtuous poor are often despised because they are poor, or rather because they are not rich, and the rich are respected and courted simply because they are rich.

Riches will always, and must, in this world, exercise

a great power upon men's social position: they are called in law a man's *personalty*, and are an important factor in determining a man's place in society. This is according to the will of Providence; nor ought any word be uttered by men who recognise this will in the order of the world, to prejudice their legitimate influence as such. What we note above, as an instance of the deceitful power of wealth, is the tendency to regard them, apart from all considerations of moral worth, a standard and badge of respectability. Hence it is that men desire wealth more than virtue, and strive to become rich rather than to become good.

Another sign which indicates how far the accumulation of wealth forms one of the ideals of life in this age is the fabulous fortunes amassed by men in our time. We calculate a man's worth very often, not by his virtues, but by his money and his estates; and if a man dies leaving vast wealth behind him, his life is considered a fortunate one. We ask not, what amount of good he did; we measure his worth, not by what he distributed and how far he communicated his own happiness to rejoice the heart of the widow and cheer the path of the fatherless, or whether he helped to swell the streams of those benevolent institutions which irrigate the world: no, say that he reserved for himself and his household a million or more of money, and we count him among the successful and the fortunate ones. The fact that such a stupendous mass of wealth is sometimes gathered by a single individual, shows plainly that the making of money is one of the great ideals of the age.

There is yet one more sign of the increasing power of wealth on the community, and our danger therefrom, to which I would refer: it is the growing importance of political economy. This is the darling science of the age—its Benjamin, and the son of its right hand. No science is so popular; no questions are discussed with greater zest than what pertain to the production and distribution of wealth. The inquiries of the ancient philosophers into the science of the good, and the beautiful, and the true, have been displaced by our political economies. Metaphysics and moral philosophy, and above all theology, our wise men inform us, are out of date—old clothes which a practical and a learned age have out-grown, the stays and pinafores of a former state of infancy and childhood. Political economy is the *toga virilis*, the manly garment of this age. We must have the practical sciences, and the science of wealth, taught our youth in school and university; something that can be turned with the greatest possible facility into hard cash. Instead of the science of goodness, we have the science of wealth investigated; and instead of the theory of riches, we have the theory of rent, of productive or unproductive labour. With all our boasted civilisation, the natives of Christendom have become one vast trading community: every Government is a Board of Trade; every Senate a Chamber of Commerce. Mark how much greater attention is paid in our Parliament to questions bearing upon our wealth and trade than to those of humanity and morals. And we have just witnessed the spectacle in the Presidential election of the United States of America of a conspiracy

of wealth and corruption against purity and justice in the administration of the Government.

Nor in this country are our hands entirely clean from the same vice. Wealth plays far too important a part as against virtue and righteousness in our elections. It is well known that the last general election was a notoriously corrupt one: bribery was rampant through the land. The *Times*, in a leading article at the time, stated, unless my memory deceives me, that the empire had been as well as sold to the highest bidder, and that our respect for the Parliament which was returned would not be increased by paying too great heed to the manner of its election. We are so much in love with wealth, that provided a candidate is covered with gold dust, and agrees with the majority in his political creed, we elect him as our legislator, and do not make any high demands upon his loyalty to the great principles of morality and righteousness which lie at the foundation of the commonwealth.

I do not make these remarks with reference to one political party more than another, nor do I make any charge against the character of our public men. Like people, like rulers. You will find as much morality carried into the politics of the nation as you will in any other sphere of practical life; and certainly many of our statesmen are as distinguished for nobility of character and their exemplary lives as for their ability and eloquence. I am not in the above remarks traducing the character of our public men. I am pleading for a higher ideal of citizenship among the people, which is the only thing that can lift high the standard of public life, and make

politics a branch of morality. This reform cannot be brought about by any number of Franchise Bills, nor by any Act of Parliament. It is a reform that must begin with the people themselves; it must grow up from the heart and conscience of the nation, in an ideal of life and citizenship taken from the teaching of Christ and His apostles. And one of its first and surest signs will be a moral emancipation from the base love of money, and a passionate regard for that righteousness which exalteth a nation.

Such are some of the manifest signs of the immense power that riches exercise upon our minds, and they show how far man's life is dominated by their deceitfulness. This is the great delusion of the age. It is through the deceitfulness of riches that the god of this world works with energy in the children of disobedience, and blinds them to all that is pure and holy and divine. It is through this men become enslaved to the things of time, and lose all sense of the world to come. Well has it been said by our great statesman and Prime Minister: "Although there are many idols to which humanity may become enslaved, and many delusions by which it may be led astray both from manhood and Christian duty, there is no idol so base, no delusion so miserable, as the servitude of the soul of man to the idol of money." It is through the love of money and the deceitfulness of riches that the good seed scattered broadcast every Sabbath over the land is choked and rendered unfruitful. These are the thorns that strangle every sense of duty, every impression of God and the world to come, that an earnest ministry must of necessity pro-

duce in its hearers: hence it is that, though constant attendants in the house of God and upon the preaching of the Word, they never come to the knowledge of the truth. Men are impressed, but not converted, because their minds are taken up entirely by the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. Oh, how many there are around us who have no time for religion—no time to serve God! All their thoughts are taken up with the things of this world; the great passion of their souls is to become rich, their whole being is a sacrifice to the idol of money. It is by a bit and bridle of gold that the great enemy leads them to perdition: it is along the slippery places garnished by the allurements of the world that they pursue the golden apples, and rush headlong into hell. How many men in this Christian land answer the Lord's description of the rich fool in the parable—"laying up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

But this use of my text is a general one. To bring the words home to each one of you, the application must be more close and particular. There is nothing easier for men, when they assemble to hear the Word of God, and sit listening to general remarks like these—there is nothing easier than to evade them, thinking that they are free from the sin so generally and so indefinitely condemned. The human heart loves to lie in ambush, and no arrow drawn at a venture will turn it, wounded and bleeding, out of the chariot of its lust and self-indulgence. God forbid that I should stand in this place to hurl charges of worldliness and covetousness at the age and nation, as if the Church of God, or even the Christian

pulpit, had hands clean from the sin. No, brethren, the deceitfulness of riches exerts a great power over believers and over the Church of God in every age. We are all in peril from it. St. Paul saw the danger threatening the apostolic Church, and instructs Timothy to put believers upon their guard against it: "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life."

We mentioned the natural depravity and ungodliness of the heart as one cause of the power of riches to deceive our souls and to lead us astray from God: this cause is immanent still in the Church. This is a root of bitterness in the believer; nor will he find himself entirely delivered from it until he lays aside his earthly tabernacle. It is true that we have been delivered from the kingdom of Satan and translated to the kingdom of God's beloved Son. This world is not the active ruling principle of the believer's life; he is made partaker of the Divine nature, and has a sense of things Divine and eternal. He does not therefore love the world nor the things of the world. Nevertheless, there abides in him a principle of corruption and unbelief which continually sprouts into buds of worldliness and forgetfulness of God. And it is marvellous how soon, even in the child of God, a worldly temperament forms itself when he is off his guard. A glance at the state of the Christian Church in general, or

any particular Church, will convince you that it too is far gone under the influence of the deceitfulness of riches. It has been said by one "that covetousness will, in all probability, prove the eternal overthrow of more characters among professing people than any other sin, because it is almost the only crime which can be indulged and a profession of religion at the same time supported." And, indeed, the words of the text can be as fittingly applied to a class of professors as to the unprofessing worldling. For the words, "and it becometh unfruitful," Luke reads, "and bringeth not fruit to perfection." From these words we infer that our Saviour intended to designate by that which was sown among thorns, not the unprofessing hearer, but the professing Christian. From the words in Luke we learn that there has been some growth of the good seed; it brings forth fruit, but not to perfection. What can this be but a profession of the Word? The ministry has made such an impress upon the soul, the good seed has so taken hold of the mind, that it brings forth fruit in an outward improvement of the life; and ultimately it may move the man to a profession of Christianity; it bringeth forth fruit, but not to perfection. We are not, therefore, doing any violence to the parable or to the verse of my text, when we take it to mark out, not the unprofessing, unbelieving world, but a class of professors, who, though in the Church, are barren on account of their worldliness. They had once a deep conviction of sin and a sense of spiritual things, and when they took upon them a profession of Christ they promised fair to become useful, fruitful, large-hearted Christians, adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things. But alas! the thorns of

worldly care grew up, the deceitfulness of riches set in, and strangled the new life that was struggling into existence in their souls. They still retain their profession; but their Christianity is a form and not a life; notwithstanding the fair promise of their first love, they have become unfruitful. Is not this, my brethren, the melancholy history of many in our churches in these days? What is the reason that the ministry of the word brings forth so little fruit in many who call themselves Christians? How is it that many are so barren in the vineyard of our Great Lord? Ah! you will find the reason in my text—"The cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and it becometh unfruitful." They are so much in the power of the world, taken up entirely with its cares, that the word cannot abide in them. The heart is full of covetousness, the deceitfulness of riches leads them astray, and they lose all thoughts of God and the world to come. They also have been smitten with the plague which is so prevalent in men of the world: they strive and long for the things of this world rather than the things of God. How many professing Christians have we in our churches in these days, who are so lost in the world, so dominated by the passion for gain, and for laying up treasure upon earth, that they can spare no time, in public or private, during the six days, for the worship of God. They strive with diligence, they wait with patience, for the returns of this world; but hunger for righteousness they have none. No strivings, no patient waiting for the Lord and the visitations of His grace. They are shrivelled up, with their spiritual sensibilities choked by the "deceitfulness of riches."

“But,” you say, “we must be after the world ; we have families to provide for, and children to settle in the world. Nor do we think that we offend the Heavenly Father in providing for our own : ‘ If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.’ ” Oh ! my brethren, this is one of the most treacherous forms of worldliness, one of the most insidious auxiliaries of the spirit of covetousness, when men take that lawful care of the world, which is both our duty and our privilege, to shield themselves in their avarice and their lust for gain. As if Almighty God, in calling them to preside over families, and to provide for their own, intended it to the prejudice of their own salvation. So insidious is the care of the world, such is the power of the deceitfulness of riches, that men think they are serving God, and doing their duty by their families, when they are doing the very thing that sets before them an example of godlessness, and that sows the seeds of covetousness and love of the world. True, you must attend to the world, and provide for your own ; but then, remember, you are to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. We are not to put this little life, in its wants and cares, foremost in our minds ; our first care and attention should be given to the life to come and the treasures of heaven : our thought of this life is to be “ no thought,” according to the teaching of our Saviour, as compared with our thought and anxieties concerning the life to come. And then, if there are families to rear and children to settle in the world, have we not an all-comprehending Providence, that clothes the grass of the field, that throws

its mantle of matchless colour and form upon the lily, and that brings out its daily portion for the crow and the sparrow? "Your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things." There is no excuse in our station, be assured, for worldliness and ungodliness.

Nor can we bring up our children in the fear of God, and prepare them for a life of Christian usefulness, which is the only proper settling of them in life, when our life has no higher purpose than the amassing of wealth and the getting of money. Who are the parents that are doing their duty towards their children, and bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? They who set before them an example of diligence and thrift with reference to this world, and at the same time watch over their souls, and ever direct their minds, through example and precept, to the world to come; giving all due attention to the affairs of this life, yet at the same time subordinating all to the kingdom of God; obeying with cheerfulness the apostolic precept, "Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit, serving the Lord." Like the oarsman in his boat, rowing in one direction and looking in another, so do they, using all diligence and foresight with their business or their profession, yet with their hearts set upon things unseen and eternal, and the eyes of their mind fixed upon the life to come; and, through their faithful attendance upon the means of grace and divine ordinances, are an example to their families and their neighbours, of blameless conversation in the sight of men, and heavenly-mindedness in the sight of God. The lives of such Christians furnish the best answer to a question often asked,

but which never ought to have been asked, "Whether it be possible to make the best of both worlds?"

Many Christians deny their religion through their worldliness. They have their affections set on the things of earth: slaves of mammon, and downtrodden by the deceitfulness of riches, their whole life is nothing but one great sigh for more, more of the world. Nor does the evil rest with themselves, for by such an example they sow the seeds of covetousness and ungodliness in their children; they inwardly inform them of things seen and temporal; and by thus producing in their minds a worldly temperament, they bind them with chains of adamant to the things of sense. Such parents may bequeath their children a competency in this life; but they leave them meagre, crabbed, miserable worldlings, totally unfit to use that competency well. Is this the bringing up of families, and the rearing of children, that is asked of us by our Heavenly Father? Is it thus that we watch over the souls intrusted to our care? and is it thus we prepare ourselves to give an account of our stewardship? Ah, brethren, better leave our children poor, but diligent in their calling; self-reliant and independent in mind; spurning with honourable pride to eat the bread of indolence, and to take up that which is not their own, and at the same time having, by our example and teaching, ingrained into their minds the great lines of the world to come, the fear of God and devotion to His service. This cannot be done by any amount of wealth; but can, and often is done, by the blessing of God upon the example of pious parents, who have learnt the secret of living well; who, by prayer and watchfulness, do not let their

hands hang down, or their knees grow feeble in the service of God ; ever using the world without abusing it ; seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Yes, yes, men can, through the grace of God, give all due attention to the world without being worldly ; they can so do their duty in providing for their own, that their children will grow up and call them blessed, for their noble example of worldly wisdom and godly life. And you can rest assured, my brethren, that whenever your intercourse with this world, and your devotion to your business or your calling, render you indifferent to the public and private duties of religion, and cause your zeal for the glory of God to grow cold : whenever it so happens, be assured that you are then overmuch engrossed with the cares of this world, and your religion is in danger of being stifled and choked by the deceitfulness of riches ; the thorns are growing up apace over your soul ; and unless they are speedily removed by the help of God's Spirit, through your own penitence and prayers, the good seed will be choked, and you will become unfruitful. It is not in our station, but in our hearts, the danger lies ; it is our sinful and unbelieving hearts that make the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches such a peril to our souls.

Nor let any one think that it is the rich and well-to-do classes of the community only that are liable to this danger from the deceitfulness of riches. It is true that their station particularly exposes them to the danger, for riches have their temptations. They tend to attach the mind more closely to this world, and to make men more indifferent to and thoughtless of the world to come ; they

strengthen the natural pride of the heart, and, by so doing, make it more difficult for those surrounded by the pomp and vanities of the world, to bring their minds to think of their guilty and lost state in the sight of God; and by covering men up in the comforts of sense, and keeping them in a continual whirl of excitement, they tend to shut out from the mind all thoughts of God and religion, and to stifle and choke them when they force an entrance. It is true now, as it was in the days of the Apostles, "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." God have mercy upon them and preserve them from the dangers of their station! That prayer of the wise man is one of the most sensible, as well as one of the most comprehensive, that ever quivered upon human lips: "Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty nor riches; but feed me with an allowance of food."

But though the rich are specially exposed to this danger, yet it besets all classes; and the words of my text speak with a very clear and humane voice even to the poor. Who are so downtrodden by the cares of this world, by the anxieties of this life as they? and who are so much in danger of casting an adulterous eye upon the riches of this world, and of longing for them more than for the righteousness of the kingdom of God? Do not the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches often beset the souls of the struggling multitude, and prevent them from doing their duty in that sphere of life to which it has pleased God to call them? The majority in every age have cast a longing eye at this forbidden fruit. And we can easily discern, in these days, a state

of unrest in the lower strata of society, produced by the spreading of communistic doctrines which chime in with the natural longing for wealth, and which become the secret Jezebel of their deceitfulness! The multitude look with envy at their more fortunate neighbours, and long for the riches which they cannot possess, and possessing cannot enjoy, far more than for the riches of grace and eternal life which are theirs if they will only take possession. They desire wealth more than grace, and the possession of the world more than the peace of God: they hunger and thirst for lands and estates rather than the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven. You will see the deceitfulness of riches sometimes ruling with as much power, if with less pomp, in the cottage of the poor, as in the mansion of the rich. Verily there is no class of people, no man, whatever be his station in life, free from this danger; no soul who has not to some extent felt the power of this charm, and defiled himself in the sight of God with this iniquity. It is a disease that runs in the blood of mankind ever since they departed from God as their highest good. The heart, godless and wandering from God, the fountain of living waters, is evermore hewing out cisterns for itself in the creature, is ever apt to grasp and embrace the good things of this world. It cannot resist their charm; it always falls a victim to their deceitfulness. Hence it is that our blessed Saviour gives the evil such a prominent place in His preaching; and His ministry from beginning to end is one great, solemn warning against our danger from this world.

And the danger is not less but greater in this age.

Civilisation tends to aggravate the evil. It tends to aggrandise the power of wealth by increasing its influence. This is the tax we have to pay for the good or the evil of civilisation: instead of making life more simple, it makes it more complex: it increases the power of riches both for good and for evil. The splendour of civilisation throws a brilliancy and a charm over wealth, and makes the deceitfulness of riches more deceitful still. The atmosphere of the age is thick with the infection; and we are in danger, notwithstanding our religious teaching and our Christian institutions, of having our impressions of things divine and eternal swept away by the spirit of the world. How true are the words of the apostle of many in our age—"They that desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which, while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

Let us, therefore, pay heed to these warnings of God's Word; and set to heart the teaching of our Saviour in the words of my text and elsewhere, concerning the power of the world upon our hearts, and the deceitfulness of riches. Our great danger in our daily intercourse with this world and the things of time is to lose the sense of the world to come—to lose it as a sentiment of the soul's life, and as a rule of conduct; so as at length to draw all our principles of action from the life that now is. That intuition of the spiritual and eternal world, which, we believe, is a natural instinct in the soul, may, by daily and godless intercourse with this world, become

practically dead; and we will, in consequence, live as men of time, having our portion in this world. It is a high duty, therefore, to do all we can, by diligently attending to the exercises of religion in private and in public, to keep alive and in activity these spiritual instincts, which open up intercourse and communication between our souls and the world to come, in like manner as our natural senses bring us into daily intercourse with this present world. And before I conclude, I will mention a few of the ordinances instituted by the grace of God, to quicken our souls to things unseen and eternal, and to preserve us in our constant dealings with the world from its evil power and deceitfulness.

1. The Word of God. Read much of your Bibles, brethren. Have constant dealings with the Word of God. This is the revealer of the eternal world: it is the divine telescope that brings into our field of view things spiritual and unseen. Herein the voices of another world speak to our souls: at one time "as the sound of many waters," like the thunder of a mighty waterfall, subduing the soul into awful wonderment before the grand realities of another life; at another speaking in that still small voice, full of music and love, of grace and truth, that captivates the heart, and wins a man out of his cave, be it of covetousness or any other sin, to serve and obey, to worship and adore, the Everlasting God. In this age of books draw closer to the Holy Scriptures; read them often, read them well, read them with prayer. Come to them with the Psalmist's prayer in your heart: "Open mine eyes so that I may see wonderful things out of thy law;" and you will understand how this world, with its constant ebbing and



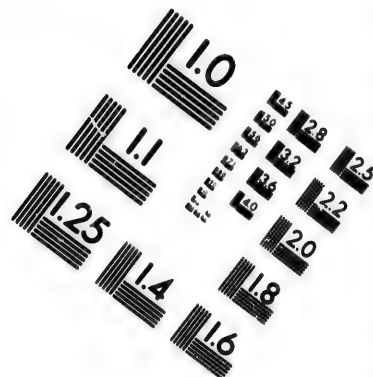
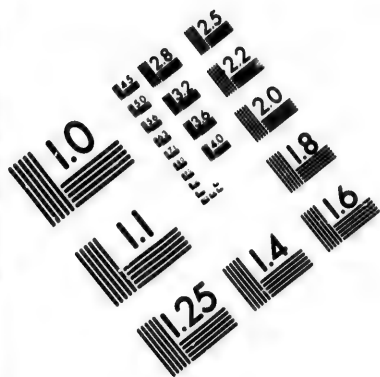
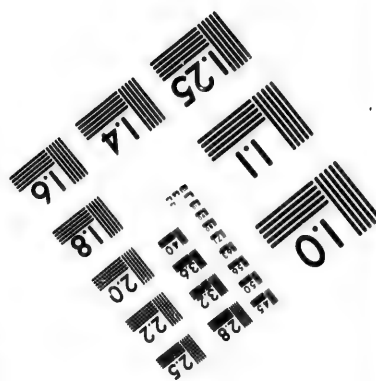
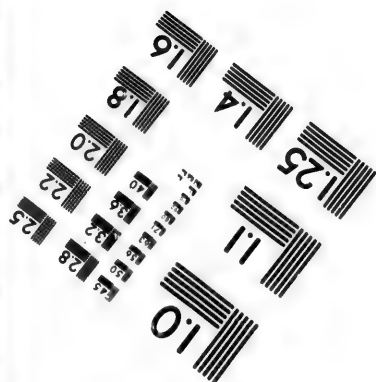
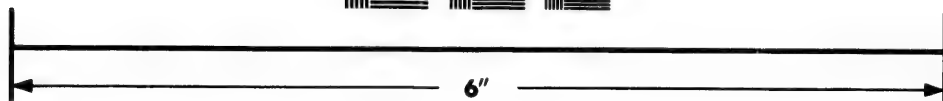
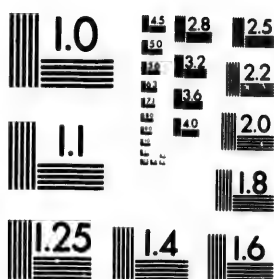


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flowing, will soon be no more; and hearing the mighty incoming of the eternal world like the murmur of a distant ocean, as you stand meditating upon its sublime verses, you will be in no danger of loving the world or the things of the world. "The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver. I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies as much as in all riches. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever, and they are the rejoicing of my heart." Such was the experience of the Psalmist whose delight was in the law of the Lord: his love of the Word preserved him from the evil world and the deceitfulness of riches. Such also will be ours, if we will take this Word to be our lamp and our light; if we enthrone it in our hearts as the rule of our life, and let it permeate the very marrow of our existence. Correct your estimate of the world by evermore bringing it to the test of God's Word; and the power of the world to come will deliver you from the thralldom of this. When eternity is in one end of the balance, time and its treasures will very soon kick the beam, and be stripped of all this deceitfulness. Betake yourselves, therefore, to the Word of God as to a city of refuge; dwell there in your thoughts and meditations; and it will deliver you from the delusions of this present evil world.

2. The house of God. Make a conscience of attending the means of grace, and of presenting yourselves in the sanctuary of God, looking up to him for His blessing upon its ordinances. Here is the mount of vision, the "Delectable Mountains," where the pilgrims catch a glimpse of the Celestial City, its gates of jasper and its

streets of gold. "In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen." Here you will find a quiet retreat from the noise and bustle of the world, and in the Spirit on the Lord's-day you too, like the beloved disciple in Patmos, will receive a revelation from Jesus Christ. You will sometimes see through the sacred ordinances, as through a vista overshadowed with glory, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the blessedness of them who are before the throne. Our Heavenly Father has commanded a blessing here. He has promised to come unto us here and bless us. Men little know what they lose, and how they give place to the world and the devil, when they become estranged from the house of God. "Until the day break and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh and to the hill of frankincense;" so speaks the beloved to his spouse, directing her to the place of their fellowship till the time of their espousals is passed. Where is the mountain of myrrh? where the hill of frankincense? It is no other than the house of God, the sanctuary of His Presence. In the night of our present state, and the shadows of our earthly pilgrimage, let us ever betake ourselves to this mount of myrrh to await the dawning of our eternal day. Here our souls will catch the first streaks of the eternal morning; and you will go forth to your respective spheres of toil in this world, under the glow of that blessed hope of everlasting life which is the strongest disinfectant from the defilement of the world. Let me beseech you, therefore, brethren, "not to forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is;" betake yourselves at all times to the sanctuary, to strengthen your souls for

combat with the evil one, and to fortify yourselves against the deceitfulness of riches.

3. The consecration of the home. Consecrate your homes to God by His Word and prayer. Do not neglect the exercises of religion in your families. Let your hearths be consecrated and daily purified by the devotions of the altar. Worship the Everlasting God in your houses ; as prophets, priests, and kings of your households, gather them before the eternal throne and bow before God your Maker. Family worship is one of the most effective means to preserve the sense of things divine and spiritual in the soul, and to shield it from the delusions of sense. The diver, before he sinks into the water, provides himself with a breathing apparatus. Without this he would soon perish, but clothed in it he can sink many fathoms under water, spend hours in the deep, and return to the surface with his treasure of pearls. Methinks that family religion is a man's spiritual diving apparatus. We are in great danger of perishing eternally, from the care of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, but family worship, under God's blessing, will keep alive in our souls a sense of divine things in our daily intercourse with the world. It is the breathing ordinance enabling a man to breathe the atmosphere of heaven while he plies his business on the earth. Maintaining your spiritual respiration thereby, you can sink into your business or your profession, making it a means of grace to yourself and of glory to God, and you will return at the close of each day, and at the close of your life with your treasure of pearls and your crown of glory. Prayer is the great ventilator of our lives ; without it we perish in the foul

atmosphere of a godless world, the slaves of its delusions and the dupes of its deceit. But through it, thank God, the currents of the eternal world rush into the soul, sweeping away the suffocating miasmas of this "slough of despair!" It is the Gulf Stream that circulates in the ocean of this life, bringing it more and more into the temperature of heaven. See to it, my brethren, that you ventilate your lives, your homes, your callings with prayer; by so doing you will watch over your religious impressions and your sense of divine things, that they be not choked by the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches; pray without ceasing, and thereby breathing the purity of heaven, you will be enabled to follow your daily calling in the fear of God, overcoming the world through faith; and though you lie among the pots of the world, your feet bemired with the heavy clay, called to a life of toil for your daily bread, your soul shall be like a dove, pure as silver, beautiful as gold, that can fly away far above this deceitful world and be at rest. And when the end comes, when this world and its riches will for ever pass away, you will have your treasure in heaven, a better and an enduring substance.

THE ONE THING NEEDFUL.

BY THE REV. T. NICHOLSON, DENBIGH.

"But one thing is needful."—LUKE x. 42.

THERE was unity in the life of the Saviour Himself—a unity strikingly sustained in, and penetrating through, the utmost variety. This we account for by His personality, and by the great object of His advent. The edifice is built according to a certain style of architecture. Come there while it is building, and you may fail to understand the different steps in the process of erection; you may fail to account for the form and location of different parts of the edifice, but when the whole superstructure is completed, and when each part is judged in its relation to the whole, there is to be recognised *one* special style of architecture which has been sustained throughout. The life of Christ should be looked upon in its entirety. Human reason dissects it, fails to explain satisfactorily one or more incidents in it, and hurries to pronounce the Saviour an impostor, His life false, and His religion deceptive. This fragmentary method applied to Christ and Christianity has been signally conducive to the scepticism which is so rife in our day. If every portion of the edifice were judged in its relation to the whole

structure, there would be recognised throughout the most consistent unity. Were we to go to the artist while his portrait is in process of execution, we might often have our misgivings; we might fail at the time to account for many an oblique line drawn by the pencil; still when the portrait is completed, it will be evident that every movement of that master hand, and every stroke of that pencil, have been executed in the light of one grand idea, and have helped to realise one leading purpose. Are there lines in the Saviour's life, which, when viewed separately, appear unto us unaccountably oblique? Still the fact remains—Jesus lived, spoke, suffered, all in the presence of one supreme purpose—there is no apparent winding in His path but that hastens Him towards one great consummation. His was a life led under a sense of the necessary; the work to be accomplished was so great, the time for work was so short, there was no room in that life save for *the indispensable*. However far apart the streams may appear to flow, there is in the life one great ocean where they all meet, and in which they are all absorbed.

The Saviour would teach us an important truth in these words, uttered by Him on this occasion. We read here that He and His disciples entered into a certain village—Bethany by name—where resided Martha and her sister Mary. We have been gratified at times by the thought that our blessed Saviour was not left altogether without friends during His sojourn among men. True, these were outnumbered by His enemies. He was hooted by the mob, but here is a family at Bethany, of a high social position, who deemed it their highest honour to welcome the Master and His disciples to their hospi-

tality. *Martha* was busily preparing her viands for the weary travellers, *Mary* sat at the Master's feet to hear His word. These sisters probably represent two characters equally necessary to the great cause—*Martha* engaged in outward service, representing the *active* character, and *Mary* at the Master's feet, plunging into the spiritual depths of His doctrine, representing the *meditative* character. *Martha* has no sympathy with *Mary's* apparent indolence. She loses her self-possession and turns to the Master, saying, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me." If the record justifies the notion that this sister interrupted the Lord while teaching, she betrays a culpable breach of reverence. With what tenderness does He reply: "*Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things, but one thing is needful.*"

The context seems to exclude the ascription of the literal meaning to these words, viz., that there was needed only a simple dish to supply the wants of the guests. "The good part which *Mary* hath chosen is a lasting possession." We have already intimated that the Saviour who was so entirely consecrated to one great object, would teach us an important truth in these words, and it is this—That it is a mistake to divide oneself among many cares and troubles. The great secret of life is to seize upon *one* thing, which will determine all else, and in the light of the context this one thing seems to be—a personal interest in Jesus Christ. This *Mary* undoubtedly had; her spirit feasted upon the words which were the outcome of the Master's spirit. Our aim will be to show that—

"A personal interest in Jesus—a personal relation to Him—a portion for oneself in Him—is the one thing needful."

It is the one thing needful—

- I. To give life a worthy aim.
- II. To give life any real value.
- III. To endure the trials of life.
- IV. To face the great hereafter.

I. *This is the one thing needful to give life a worthy aim*: If we would start aright, we must start at the feet of the Great Master. Here alone can we find reliable direction *how* to live.

Jesus Christ appeared in the flesh, not only to work out the scheme of our redemption, but also to reveal *life*—He "brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel;" and not life beyond the grave alone, but life also this side of death. A stream of light emanates from His precepts and from His example to dispel the darknesses of life. He alone can "set our feet upon a rock, and establish our goings." What a terrible thing it is *to live*! Life! Who has fathomed the depth of its mysteries? No one, save the Giver of it, understands it. He knows it in relation to its primitive source, and in relation to its goal in the great future. We insult the very dignity of our own life by going elsewhere to seek directions how to live. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him," and Him only. He alone can "direct thy paths."

It is often asked—"Is life worth living?" We answer in the affirmative, when life has a worthy object. We

know there are men around us who have never spent a single moment over this matter, who go inadvertently through their monotonous routine of duties day after day, and heedlessly look forward to the time when death will put an end to their present *mode* of existence. What a tremendous mistake! Our life cannot be the result of chance. Even the world of matter is not the result of chance, although a certain class would have us believe that the fortuitous and undirected movements of these atoms, through millions of ages, resulted in the present universe. Well has it been said by a living Divine, that "it is far more unreasonable to believe that the atoms or constituents of matter produced of themselves, without the action of a Supreme Mind, this wonderful universe, than that the letters of the English alphabet produced the plays of Shakespeare without the slightest assistance from the human mind known by that famous name." Is it not evident that one sphere of life is subservient to a higher one? The material world has an object. It does not move by chance; but if this be said of the material creation, what about *man*, the lord of creation, whose body is so fearfully and wonderfully made, and whose spirit is a reflection of the everlasting Spirit? Has that mysterious personality, by a Divine fiat called into being, to rush at random hither and thither? No; a thousand times *no*. There is a direction towards which all the issues of life should tend. There is an object worthy of man. God had an object in creating; have we an object in living? We have lost our way, we are wandering in the dreary wilderness, if God's object in creating and our object in living be not one and the same. He Him-

self reveals unto us His object. "For I have created him, I have formed, yea, I have made him *for my glory—for my glory.*" This is the way: walk ye in it. But who will set our feet upon that path? Jesus will. He teaches us to pray thus: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory." It is Jesus alone that teaches us to live so as to attain the object which God Himself had in creating. Start at the feet of the Master, or you will go astray.

What is the ambition of yonder young man? He has a lucrative post. He intends to excel in his profession. He looks with eagerness towards wealth, position, fame, and power, and strives hard to reach them. All this is right within certain limits; but he must start at the Master's feet, or he will encounter difficulties which he will never be able to surmount. Wealth, position, fame, and power: do you see the lighthouses built upon those rocks to warn you of the danger? And alas! alas! how many souls have been completely wrecked on those rocks! In order to make power, fame, position, wealth, subservient to the glory of God, a personal interest in Christ is the one thing needful.

II. *This is the one thing needful to give life any real value*:—What an all-important truth this must be! The real worth of life depends upon its ruling principle. What is Paul's teaching? That a man may speak with the tongues of men and of angels, that he may understand all mysteries and all knowledge, that his faith may remove mountains, that he may bestow all his goods to feed the

poor, that he may even give his body to be burned—and what does it all come to? *Nothing*. Nothing, in the absence of love for a personal Saviour. Place any other motive at the root of these good works, and they equal *nothing*. "The conclusion of the whole matter is, Fear God, and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man," or—without the word "duty," which is not in the original—"for this is the *whole* man." This is the man in the completeness of his being, for deprive him of this personal relation to God, and you deprive him of *all*. You will have but a cipher remaining.

The alchemists of old, who paved the way for the modern science of chemistry, were, it is said, searching for a substance which contained the original principle of all matter, and had the power of dissolving all things into their primitive elements. Here was the one thing needful to give value to all material objects brought into contact with it. We do not suppose this was ever discovered by them, or that it ever existed save in their wild imagination; but there are many present, I trust, who have found in effect a spiritual equivalent—that one thing needful which gives value to all brought into contact with it, that philosopher's stone which turns everything into glittering gold in the eye of Heaven itself. Even all the life becomes consecrated—the ruling of nations, the regulating of households, obeying monarchs, obeying parents, obeying masters, even what often seems trivial, eating and drinking. This one thing needful can set value to all. You take a cheque to the bank to be cashed; but to be honoured it must bear the right signature; otherwise the cheque is valueless. And if we mean to carry on any

transaction with Heaven—every prayer, every service, must bear the name of Jesus, or they will be rejected as worthless.

For the moment we will go as far as the time of Ezekiel in search of an illustration. You remember the vision of the resurrection of dry bones, "Behold there were very many in the open valley; and lo! they were very dry." Ezekiel is commanded to prophesy, and as he prophesied "there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone; and lo! the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above." Here is perfect articulation, and order, and symmetry—what more is wanted? Why, life is wanted. Then Ezekiel is commanded to prophesy unto the wind, and he cries out, "Thus saith the Lord God, Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." "And the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army." Leaving on one side now the immediate interpretation—what did the breath of life do? It simply set value to the body previously existing. Was there no need of the articulation, of the flesh, and the sinews, and the skin? Decidedly there was, but of what avail were they without life? We fear there are members in our churches these days, who make a satisfactory appearance before the world. There has been a certain shaking in their lives which has brought the bones together, bone to his bone; their outward character, as far as the public eye can see, is blameless; but still the breath of life is wanting. We may well pray above the heap of dry, lifeless bones, "Come from

the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live." We are not left without instances of this in Scripture. You remember the young man who came to the Saviour, saying, "All these things have I kept from my youth up, what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come and follow me." Thy religion has been all for thine own sake: renounce self, and follow *Me*; live henceforth for *My* sake. But rather than obey he went away sorrowful. A beautiful coin truly, but without the true ring; the breath of life was wanting, though the bones had come together in good order. How exact the Pharisees are in outward service—they tithe mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, but pass by judgment and the love of God: "these ought they to have done, and not to leave the other undone." The comparative importance of these things is here set forth—in neglecting "the love of God" they ignored the *one thing needful* to put value on their other services. Well may we pray above the dry bones—"Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

The discipline was strict in the church at Ephesus, which could not bear those that were evil. Even its patience and labour deserve honourable mention; outwardly its condition was satisfactory, but it had left its first love, the breath of life was wanting. Whatever grows upon the branches of our life is valueless, unless it be the spontaneous outcome of our connection with the true vine. A personal interest in Christ is the one thing needful to give life any real value.

III. *Personal relation to Christ is the one thing needful to endure the trials of life.*

"Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward." Trouble then is inevitable in a sinful condition, in a corrupt world. "It is not an accident or variation of our being, but our lot and destiny," from which it is vain for us to hope to escape. But in order to endure all and to be "more than conquerors" in all, the one thing needful is a personal interest in Christ. We may glide easily, in virtue of a slight external impulse, along the levels of our life, we may go down the slopes ourselves, but if we mean to climb triumphantly over the rugged hills, we must link ourself to a mighty Saviour.

Jesus Himself is not a stranger to suffering. He is the "Man of sorrows." His was not a life of ease; His was not a velvety path. He was not perfected without suffering; and without suffering His followers cannot attain perfection. He has given a new meaning to affliction, and has shown that every trial may serve the highest purpose. Is not this "the one thing needful" to endure? "No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby." "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven." Here is shed a new light upon suffering.

Our happiness is not dependent chiefly upon our surroundings, but upon our character. Indeed, the influence of the surroundings seems to be determined by our

own condition: they leave upon us the impress we are prepared to receive. The man who is colour-blind cannot distinguish the different shades of colour around him, the deficiency, we presume, lying not in the outward phenomena but in the internal organ of vision. Is there not something analogous in the spiritual world? Our circumstances influence us according to our individual character. Harken to the Saviour's teaching—"For a man's life," or a man's happiness, "consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." From the context, however, it is evident that it does depend upon the man's character. To believe this we have need only to look at the same man in different circumstances, or at different men in the same circumstances. No, it does not depend chiefly upon our surroundings. Our missionaries voluntarily deny themselves the advantages of civilization and the refined joys of social culture, and plunge into the midst of savageness, cruelty, and barbarism. Are they happy? A fellow-student of mine, who is now connected with the South Indian Mission, wrote me lately to say that he was as happy as ever. Where does the secret lie? He has made a complete surrender of himself and his services to the Saviour, who sojourned unharmed among the beasts of the wilderness, and who can still preserve him from the raging fierceness of wild men and wild beasts, as happy as ever. The sweetest warbler among birds is heard in the night; and this old Book tells us of other night-warblers. "I know that my Redeemer liveth." "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." That is a nightingale's song which resounded in the dark gloomy

depths of affliction. No, it does not depend chiefly whether you are in a fiery furnace or in a sumptuous feast; the presence of the Son of Man can make a heaven out of the fiery furnace, and His absence can convert the gorgeous hall of royalty into a miserable dungeon.

Israel came in their wilderness journeyings to Marah, where they could not drink of the waters, for they were bitter. A serious calamity—must they die of thirst? You suggest they ought to find a route without a Marah in it. No; no need of that. The Lord showed them a tree, which, when cast into the waters, the waters were made sweet. Don't be deluded, you cannot have a wilderness journey without its Marah. But the text points out a tree that will sweeten the bitter waters—personal interest in Christ.

He will not leave you long in the storm without lending you a helping hand. Our Saviour, after feeding the five thousand, and sending the multitude away, went up into a mountain apart to pray. What were His petitions we cannot tell; but this we know—there was no vestige of hypocrisy in His prayers. What great concern connected with our salvation now weighed upon His soul has not been recorded, but He must have been there in the depth of night, wrestling with His Father. Not far away His disciples have been caught in a terrific storm. They are battling with the raging elements; the waves are furious under the lash of the wind, and the yawning gulf of despair is opening to swallow them. Jesus, knowing their danger, left His Father, possibly left some petitions unsaid, in order to appear on the scene to help the dis-

tressed disciples—and “when He came into the ship the wind ceased.” So it is ever since. He is “the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.” The one thing needful is a personal interest in Him who can still every tempest.

IV. *The one thing needful to face the great Hereafter.*

An hour is coming when this text will be an awful reality to us, whatever be the impression it leaves upon us at present. This will be the *one* concern, which will engross every other thought. We ask to-day, “What shall we eat? what shall we drink? wherewithal shall we be clothed?” This side of anxiety, this is right. You ought to be concerned about the wants of the family. But an hour is approaching when you will be removed from that relation, and from that responsibility; and one great question will absorb every other question in itself. I imagine that I now witness your last moments. Amid the pleasantest surroundings, amid all the attention of which earthly skill is capable, amid the tears of dear ones who will lament the loss; your possessions disposed of to your survivors; and you feel it is your last moment in this life—death with its cold hand makes you loosen your grasp on this transient world. But what then? Is it blank despair? Is it blackness of darkness for ever? Ah! I see the hand of your faith lifted up in search of another Hand mightier than your own to lead you safely across the swellings of Jordan. That wanting, all will be wanting.

However dark the great unknown beyond is to us—and we are often crushed by the fear to launch out into

it—our only hope on the confines of time will be the assurance that Jesus is ruler there as well as here, and that they that trust Him will never be plucked out of His hand. Do we know Him? Have we a personal interest in Him?

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LOVING GOD'S SALVATION.

BY THE REV. THOMAS REES, MERTHYR.

"Such as love Thy salvation."—Ps. xl. 16.

ALL who are saved unto eternal life not only accept God's salvation from a sense of their absolute and urgent need of it, as the alone method that meets their case, but they fall in love with it, give it their best affections. They are so deeply enamoured of it that it becomes the object of their boundless admiration. Assuredly they love God for it; but they are not apathetic, much less disaffected, towards the salvation itself. Experiencing its benign, restorative influences, they delight themselves in its Divine Author—"the God of their salvation;" but they do not, cannot overlook the salvation itself. They cherish ardent love towards it. This fact is incontestable, verified as it is in the experience of the saved as well as taught in Holy Writ. It is as much the natural and necessary result of partaking of the fulness of its blessings as any ordained sequence can be. It cannot be shared in, and its blessed virtue enjoyed, without taking a deep hold on its possessor. This holds good under every dispensation. The Psalmist gives expression to this truth in the words of the text; it holds good still;

and will hold good, not only to the end of time, but throughout the endless ages of eternity. "As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end."

There are some things connected with true religion in the present world which are evidently subject to the law of change. They do not continue long the same. But the love of which the text speaks, love of God's salvation, continues unchanged, and will remain unaffected by the vicissitudes of the coming ages. There were some things intimately related, if not quite indispensable, to the existence and prosperity of the cause of true religion under the Old Dispensation, that are not so any longer. Indeed, their observance now would be an egregious sin. They were appointed "until the time of the reformation." And, doubtless, some things sustain a close and important relation to religion in our days, that will be entirely laid aside, if not before, at any rate in the Millennium. Scriptural piety will be so much better understood, in its deep spirituality, and such thorough sympathy with it will universally prevail, that it will outgrow much that is now in vogue, and discard things which we in our simplicity, or in our vanity, foolishly imagine to be essential to its subsistence, if not to its perfection. Have we not sufficient ground to conclude that Christianity is progressing steadily, though slowly, towards a much higher state of perfection on earth, and that its grand ideal will be realised in the good time coming in a much larger measure than has yet been attained? Do not the predictions of inspired prophecy intimate this clearly enough, and does not analogy from the past unmistakably

suggest the same? Religion is not to continue for ever as we now see it, but it will be vastly improved as well as more extensively propagated. Hardly will our common Christianity be recognised then as the same, by reason of the great change for the better which it will have undergone. Blessed time! It is difficult to refer to it without breathing a prayer for its speedy coming.

But to return to our subject. Many things will be connected with our holy religion, even at its best on the earth, that will be allowed to drop at the winding up of the Dispensation; but the distinguishing characteristic spoken of in the text—love of God's salvation—will make its way to the higher, final state of the redeemed in glory, to live there for ever. Many things connected with religion once were dropped in the transition from the former economy to the present; and many things connected with it now will be thrown away in the advance from the present state of the Church to the Millennial age; and many more things will be discarded in the change from the then age to the final state of the Church in glory. But be the changes in the past what they may, the love of God's salvation has come down through them all; and be the changes in the future what they may, this will survive every improvement; and, having ended its course on earth, it will wing its way to heaven, to continue to burn there for ever. Loving God's salvation "never faileth." Hence it is of the utmost importance to possess and cherish this gracious feeling.

Let me avail myself of the opportunity of remarking by the way, that God has a salvation for us, the apostate

race of Adam; purposely provided for, as well as eminently fitted to, our case. This statement contains nothing new; on the contrary, it is widely known and admitted. All that is in view is to bring it to remembrance. Nevertheless, it is to be hoped that the fact of its being so well known does not render it less valuable or less acceptable; otherwise, to say the least, it is not a favourable sign. If contact with this precious truth, by reading or hearing, is felt to be distasteful, it betrays something radically wrong; for familiarity, instead of exciting our dislike, ought to have the opposite effect, that of kindling our love towards it. Such will be the immediate and inevitable result, if it be a truth of the heart. Some truths there are, in which we cannot experience the same pleasure by frequent communion with them. Truths of the intellect, of the reason, and of the imagination, like the facts and objects of sense, must lose their novelty and fascination by increased intimacy with them. They cannot, according to our mental constitution, retain the same hold on us by renewing our acquaintance with them. It is quite the reverse, however, with the truths of the heart, to which class salvation belongs, if it has been actually applied to us individually. These truths never tire us, however often they are presented to us. Instead of our gratification diminishing the oftener they are addressed to us, this is the very means of increasing it. This is a test whether we love God's salvation. But even on the supposition that some of you are not especially interested in this subject, and that another not quite so commonplace and antiquated, but more literary, scientific, or

philosophical, were preferable, it is not in this instance a sufficient reason for consulting your choice or gratifying your taste, for there is the most urgent need of introducing this vital truth, and we are under the most sacred and solemn obligations to give it publicity and prominence. Withhold it we dare not at our peril, but inculcate it continually; for it is the sum and substance of the Gospel, its grand distinctive peculiarity, that makes it good news, glad tidings of great joy—the best news, the gladdest tidings of the greatest joy.

The subject suggests a melancholy and distressing fact, a fact which required such a gracious divine interposition, and which should not be passed by without noticing it distinctly, namely, that mankind are by nature in such an awful predicament, that we stand in imperative need of such a salvation. This is so manifest, and, moreover, so generally admitted, that it need not be proved, although it is practically denied by the greater number. We are no longer what we were made, what we ought to be, nor what we must be ere it be well with us, here or hereafter. We are fallen; become sinners, guilty and depraved; full of the materials of misery, and of the elements of ruin. Our condition is most deplorable. We are represented in Scripture as lost and dead. What this language means we know not, except that it is certain that it imports all that is evil and woeful. No adequate conception of this can be had at present; we must wait awhile, till we open the commentaries of the world to come, and learn there from the experience of heaven and hell. How slow we are to believe this, especially with regard to ourselves, personally, and lay

it seriously to our hearts, though we consent to its truth with the lips! This is the great reason why the salvation of God is so sadly neglected; men are not convinced of, and made to feel, their great need of it. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick."

But this point I shall now dismiss, in order to come to what is more agreeable and pleasurable, namely, the salvation which God has provided for us, and revealed to us in the Gospel. Of the tender mercy of God our condition is not hopeless, however bad it is. He has undertaken for us, and provided a salvation adapted to all the requirements and exigencies of our case. Blessed be His name for this. This salvation is His workmanship; His impress is on every part of it, and on its whole history from beginning to end. It is divine in its origin, accomplishment, and application. It has flowed from his free, sovereign, everlasting love, and been planned by His great manifold wisdom. It is God's scheme. His infinite understanding discovered it. "Wherein He hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." Nor could the wisdom of the most exalted created intelligences devise the plan. So many extensive and awful demands were to be met and satisfied; so many supreme, righteous, and conflicting claims were to be considered, adjusted, and maintained; such formidable obstacles were to be surmounted, that none but Divine Wisdom could find out a way to fulfil all these stupendous requirements, and save fallen man. And it was God's Almighty power that brought it to pass. Each of the Divine persons in the ever-blessed Trinity fulfils His respective work in connection with it, and the praise and glory will

redound to the Triune Jehovah for ever. And the word of this salvation has been sent to us.

Now it might fairly be expected that all would accept it gratefully, appropriate it gladly, and love it dearly. But this is not the case. The greater number by far care nothing for it: instead of accepting it, they reject it; instead of making much of it, they slight it, though its immediate object is to promote their higher and everlasting well-being. Such conduct is extremely criminal; it is the blackest spot on the character of our race. The multitude depreciate and neglect it; they frown upon it as a needless intruder, if not as the enemy of their peace. However, all do not harbour these wrong feelings. Some are on better terms with it, and accord it a worthier reception. As sure as that many do not love this salvation, there are some who do, and their number continually increases. I would fain hope that the greater number who hear me to-day are sincere and thorough friends of God's salvation, and that all will be so before they die. The sooner the better.

Those who are rightly affected towards God's salvation were not so once. Under the bewitching and cursed spell of the "deceitfulness of sin," which misleads so fatally, "there was neither form nor comeliness in it; when they looked at it, there was no beauty that they should desire it." "It was despised and rejected, and they hid as it were their faces from it; it was despised, and they esteemed it not." But a great change for the better, a complete revolution, has taken place in their views and feelings, rendering this salvation altogether lovely in their sight. It is now all their desire. They

count all things else, even what they formerly most highly esteemed, as loss and dung that they may gain it.

Some love the salvation of God whilst others neglect it, but the strange thing is that both classes do the one and the other for precisely the same reasons. They find occasion in the same things to feel and act so differently towards it, that the one loves for the same reason that the other does not, and *vice versa*. Not only these two classes divide the world between them, for there is no neutrality in this matter,—he that does not love hates; but what makes the one cherish it causes that the other dislikes it, saying, “My soul, come not thou into its secret.” It attracts and repels, makes foes and friends, for precisely the same reasons. However strange and paradoxical it may appear, it is nevertheless a sober, solemn truth.

To make this clear, think of the Divine provision as a salvation in the true and full sense of the word—a salvation in reality from the evil itself, from sin in every respect. Salvation is a deliverance, not merely from sin in its fearful, ruinous consequences,—the curse, the wrath, the suffering, the woe,—but from the original, fruitful source of all this frightful misery, from that which necessarily incurs and righteously entails all this. This puts men's principles to the test, and divides them at once into two classes. A well-known reason why this salvation is hated is that it involves a deliverance from sin itself, in its dominion over us, in our love of it, and our living in it, as well as from the punishment which it deserves. Because it insists on this absolutely and uncompromisingly, and consists principally and essentially

in this, some will have nothing to do with it, whilst others view this as its strongest recommendation and give it their unswerving loyalty. That it promises and engages to deliver wholly from sin in itself invests it with invaluable importance in their eyes and infallibly secures their attachment.

Let me not be misunderstood. It is not attempted to deny that men love salvation in the sense of deliverance from the direful consequences of sin hereafter. That would betray unpardonable ignorance. No fact is more patent and incontrovertible than that men are in love with salvation in this vague, outward, selfish sense. They cannot be otherwise. It is not requisite that a man should be born again in order to it. He need not be savingly changed by the grace of Heaven to make him wish to escape the wrath to come; but it is absolutely necessary that he should be so changed in order to love the salvation of God. Man in his native state rejoices in the prospect of exemption from suffering. Indeed, he can do no other, constituted as he is, with self-love as a deep, original, and powerful principle in his nature, constraining him instinctively, independently of his will, in a way which he cannot help, to ardently desire his own safety and felicity. He is deeply averse to pain and perdition, and cannot endure the thought of them. This has clung tenaciously to him despite the violence done to his nature by sin. It is not a thing he has inherited in virtue of the Fall; but is innate, interwoven with his nature, and quite legitimate to be indulged within certain bounds.

It would appear, forsooth, that self-love, especially in

the form of self-defence, is a universal law, relating to life of every sort, even the lowest in the vegetable creation, and particularly in sentient existences, both on land and in the sea. This is so well established that it has passed into a proverb that "self-preservation is the first law of life." The sensitive plant is an instance in point. The sponge also may be adduced as another: how to classify it is a moot question, lying as it does on the borders of the animal and vegetable kingdoms, partaking of properties that are common to both. Naturalists tell us that, in its native home in the deep, it will draw itself together of its own accord in order to escape destruction. Being often devoured by the fish for food, it quickly discovers their approach, and to protect itself against their marauding designs it contracts itself voluntarily into a much smaller space than it can be squeezed into forcibly; but the danger over, if it be fortunate enough to escape, it again expands itself into its usual size. It will not yield itself up to be devoured so long as it can help it. There is scarcely need to add, that no creature will willingly suffer, especially what threatens life, without a hard struggle and a persistent resistance to the last. Linked as this instinctive feeling is with higher considerations, it operates powerfully in us. We dread pain, recoil from peril, and seek safety and happiness. "All that a man hath will he give for his life." Hence we find mankind generally coveting earnestly to be saved in the sense of escaping from misery and enjoying bliss. At least they choose heaven rather than hell, though they will not accept it in the only way in which it may be had, and the only way in which it is worth having.

As soon as in a manner they are in love with salvation, they do not like the salvation of God—all of it—or even the chief thing in it. Their idea of it is most defective, if not positively erroneous. They have no sympathy with the salvation of the Gospel; a salvation that would leave them in their sins, and only deliver them from punishment, is the one they covet. They are deeply in love with forgiveness of sins and immunity from suffering their penal consequences, but they reject utterly the way in which all this may be secured.

“You will accept pardon and safety,” we say. “Oh yes, readily and gladly,” they reply; “assure us on satisfactory grounds that we have to fear no evil, and it will afford us the relief we require in order to be happy.” “But what say you about conversion, contrition, compunction of soul for sin, resisting, mortifying, and renouncing it, denying yourselves, doing the will of God? &c.” “There, that is more than enough; that is why we are at variance with the salvation of God; we wish to be spared all that drudgery, we have a decided objection to it.” The truth is, they prefer not to be saved than part with their sins and practise that holiness which accompanies salvation; whilst those who love God’s salvation, love it for these very reasons, namely, that it slays sin within them and leads them on to purity of thought and life. This it is that recommends it to them and renders it the object of their love. What! will not all join readily and heartily to adopt the language of the well-known verse—

“Salvation! oh the joyful sound,
’Tis pleasure to our ears”?

No, not quite. Many will not confess that the salvation of God is to them a "joyful sound," at least the whole of it, for it will not tolerate their iniquities, and they cannot tolerate it. There is no peace between it and their evil; consequently there is no peace between them and it. Because it is a sworn enemy of their sin, they are inveterate enemies of it. However much they may desire to escape the penal consequences of sin and to enter never-ending joy at last, they are not ready to accept the same on God's terms by the utter renunciation of the world, the flesh, and the devil.

That the word "salvation" implies deliverance from danger and distress, together with the fruition of happiness, is unquestionable; but doubtless it implies a great deal more, especially in the New Testament. The original term, and its equivalents in English and Welsh, conveys the twofold thought of *safe* and *sound*. The idea of saving health lies at the root of the word, as its etymology denotes. With this health is connected safety as its consequence or result. What! is not deliverance, safety, the meaning of salvation? Does not the dictionary, and even the Bible dictionary, explain it so? Yes, probably, and under the circumstances nothing better perhaps could be done. But salvation notwithstanding is not mere deliverance. True, they are inseparably connected in God's method of mercy; but, though they are not to be separated, yet they ought to be distinguished. What God has joined together, let no man put asunder; and here, at least, no man can, however much he may try. This double meaning of the original word is the reason why the Welsh translators, in especial, render

it sometimes "heal," and sometimes "deliver;" and why they give the word "heal" in passages where the English version gives "save." For instance Heb. vii. 25, "He is able to save to the uttermost;" Welsh, "heal completely." Again Rom. viii. 24—"We are saved by hope;" Welsh, "healed." Thus the salvation of God "forgives all our iniquities and heals all our diseases;" it covers our sins and cures us from their infection; it restores our souls as well as remits our transgressions.

Yes, salvation does mean rescuing from peril, and this favour is not to be lightly thought of. There is a place of torment, an awful place, and it is of the greatest importance that we be delivered from entering it. There are not many, if any, living godly in Christ Jesus, who do not feel anguish of soul in thinking of it, and who do not make it the business of their lives to escape it. What to do to be saved in this respect must come home effectually to every heart before the salvation of God will be duly prized and gratefully embraced. But we should not rest satisfied with this, else we receive the grace of God in vain. However indispensable this experience may be to the spiritual life, it ought by degrees to be comparatively lost; at least that another greater—yes, I advisedly say greater—should supersede it and occupy its place, namely, what to do to be healed, to be spiritually well. A place of pure, unending blessedness lies beyond, and it is worth while going there, even on the vulgar view of it, as a place of rest in the absence of all pain and sorrow; and salvation richly deserves to be made much of because it holds forth the hope of all this. But even "the fullness of joy and the pleasures for evermore" must be lost

sight of, comparatively speaking; and something else more important should absorb the attention, viz., to be made meet for the holy happiness of heaven; for this latter cannot be imparted to us or enjoyed by us without our being first made all we ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness. To escape the darkness, the fire, and the flames, is not the greatest thing after all. Is it not? No. What can be greater than that? To be so rid of evil before we die that there will be no fear God will consign us to them. The place prepared for the devil and his angels is a place for incurables. Oh no; to arrive without fail in the land of rest, to feast and sing, is not the greatest thing. What can be greater? To be made such by the salvation of God in this world, that He will be sure to receive us there at last, no other place suiting us. Strange to say, here men quarrel with the salvation of God instead of allowing it to do their proper work upon them by eradicating sin from their nature. But for this selfsame reason it is ardently loved by those whose hearts are in the right.

To be taken up so exclusively with the outward, objective blessing, which after all is the inferior one, is a sad mistake. We do not thereby consult our true and highest interest; for what will it profit a man to escape the threatened infliction if a greater and more fatal evil afflicts him personally? Confessedly, that is a very short-sighted prudence or policy which is entirely absorbed with the lesser favour while the greater is altogether neglected, besides the consideration that in this case it is totally suicidal. The old illustration shows this excellently. Suppose a convicted felon has been reprieved; what is

he better if a fatal disease afflicts him, that will speedily take away his life? He shall not mount the scaffold, it is true, and expiate his crime by execution; but he has caught the jail fever, and will die in agony soon. And how much better would the sinner be to escape the condign punishment he deserves and dreads, when he carries in him all the materials of the worst death, a heart full of sin and guilt? The pain and anguish of this will constitute "the second death." Our highest wisdom therefore is to make it our first concern to be delivered from indwelling sin, then no harm can befall us. It is sin itself, not the punishment, that is the great evil.

Once more I repeat, in dismissing this part of the subject, a safe arrival in heaven, according to the popular view, is not the chief thing. This would not advantage us much, without our being radically cured of moral evil in all its forms, and made spiritually well and sound. Possibly to reach heaven in safety is the great, if not the sole, object of many; but how defective this view of salvation! They fear the door will be closed against them—yes, this fear does haunt and disturb them a little occasionally. But if they had their heart's desire, what would they gain? Emphatically this is not the greatest thing. The redeeming work of Jesus Christ did not consist in making of heaven a lumber-room, to receive all refuse; but He became the Author of eternal salvation to as many as will obey Him, making them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. You would not be happy even in heaven itself, unless the salvation of God effected its appropriate work on you and in you; and the hope of

this is the reason why it is loved by all who undergo the blessed process.

Again, what has been sought to be proved, will be seen still further by adverting to the *freeness* of the salvation. This will further illustrate and establish the truth of my statement, for it is a well-known fact that God's salvation, by reason of its entire and absolute freeness, is at a discount on the one hand, and at a premium on the other. Next to the entire moral recovery it effects, its freeness alike stirs up hatred and produces love; and men fall out and fall in with it for the selfsame reason. Because of its purely gracious nature some are gravely offended with it, whilst others are mightily pleased, inasmuch as they know that it is on this condition that it meets their need. This characteristic of the Divine remedy proves a rise and a fall to many, rendering it the savour of life unto life and the savour of death unto death. The evil of the human heart takes occasion to reject this salvation, because its perfect freeness mortifies the pride of the self-righteous spirit, laying it in the dust, which, however, it will not brook. But if the highminded thus turn away from it with disdain, its freeness is the very means of ingratiating it in the favour of its recipients. Salvation by grace gives hope to the poor, needy, and lost sinner, who is conscious of his great misery, unworthiness, and ill-desert. How highly he prizes this graciousness! How greatly it enhances the value of the salvation in his sight! How it cheers, relieves, supports him! It imparts unspeakable joy, and inspires loyal love. If its gratuitous freeness spoils it to blind, conceited unbelief, the selfsame pecu-

liarity makes it doubly precious to the believer, and evokes his devoutest affection.

It is wonderful how much lapsed man is for having a hand in his own salvation, by doing or paying some compensation. He is for coming to an agreement or making a bargain with God! There is a strong tendency to legalism in man's nature, and he would much like to make terms with his Maker. His favourite scheme is to compound with God. He confesses readily that he is an offender; but what he deems most objectionable is—that he cannot make any amends or reparation for his transgression, or conciliate Him whom He has displeased. Man is not willing to acknowledge that he is so bad or his case so desperate as represented in the Gospel. From the truth with regard to this he turns away and goes after fables. He desires to propitiate the Deity, and addresses himself to this task when conviction of sin disturbs him. It is an old custom of his to seek to establish his own righteousness, not knowing the righteousness of God in His holy law, nor submitting to His righteousness in the Gospel. Though fallen and lost, he has overweening conceits of himself and his goodness, and under-estimates the enormity of sin and his own corruption. He cannot brook the idea that he is so bad as depicted in Scripture. Consequently he is most averse to be wholly indebted to free sovereign grace for his salvation. He would much like to have some consideration in his favour, and to improve himself a little. But God will have nothing to do with him on this ground. Man cannot merit or procure any blessing connected with

his recovery, and God will have him to see and confess it. The great God will not enter into partnership with the sinner in this matter, and it His object to exclude boasting save in His own infinite grace. He wants man to feel his entire indebtedness to free grace. His salvation is directly intended and specially fitted to impress this on the mind. Indeed, this is an essential part of our individual recovery. It is the peculiar glory of gospel grace to humble every believer in the dust, to fill him with dreadful apprehensions of sin, to raise him from his lost state, to establish him in the truth of obedience, and bind him to God by the ties of gratitude and love. He will willingly and freely give all we want. "Ask and ye shall receive." God is too rich and generous to do anything but give gratuitously. He knows not the way to do anything else but to give. Salvation may be had freely, for nothing; and only so can it be obtained—for the mere receiving. He never tires of giving. It is His favourite employment. He giveth liberally, and upbraideth not. And all is to the praise of the glory of His grace.

Is there room to fear that this is not sufficiently understood? Is it a fact that even those who have been trained in the doctrines of grace endeavour to smooth and settle things with the supreme Arbiter of their destiny? Does not the language of professing Christians savour too much of this occasionally? We live too much under the law, either from ignorance or perverseness. The principle of self-righteousness is so universal, pervasive, subtle, and stubborn, and, moreover, so flattering and insinuating, that we stand in hourly danger from its influence. Not only is it in the ascendancy in the heart

of the natural man, but it follows the believer and disturbs his peace. It accompanies him when alone in the most secret places, kneels with him when engaged in prayer, and mingles its whispers with his song of praise. It stains his best service! How hard to get rid of it!

However, the clear and uniform teaching of the Gospel is, that we are to accept, appropriate, and trust in a free salvation—free as the air and the light—free like all God's gifts. We need nothing to recommend us to it except our misery and poverty and urgent need. Instead of the greatness of our sins disqualifying us, it is our chief fitness for it; we should convert the greatness of our need and unworthiness into a plea for its succour. "God hath exalted His Son to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins." "By grace ye are saved." What a relief to the guilty penitent to experience God's salvation! And it is a relief to God to give it! His delight is unbounded when virtue flows out of Him into some sinful heart. He saves with singing. It is a scriptural doctrine that God is blessed because He is holy, but it is equally orthodox that He is blessed because of His goodness, because He gives and finds delight in giving. "It is more blessed to give than to receive," and this is truer of the Creator even than of the creature. It is in His heart to give. Is not this one reason why the creative fiat went forth, and a universe was called into existence? God's infinite love impelled Him to create that He might find objects to whom He might communicate of His own blessedness.

"But we must believe to be saved," you say. Yes; but let not this be misunderstood or perverted at our

peril. We are saved by faith. Why is this the medium? "It is by faith that it might be of grace." Believing is absolutely necessary, not because there is the least merit in it, but the opposite—because there is no merit in it, nor any claim to merit, and that its very nature is to renounce entirely all merit, and that the salvation of God must be accepted as a free gift. This is the reason why faith discharges the office it does. It is not fixed upon in preference to any other mental act for its present holy nature, or on account of its future holy influence, but because it is the farthest possibly removed from any appearance of goodness, possessing no resemblance of a claim to merit. It just "sets to its seal that God is true." "God justifieth the ungodly." We are saved by faith, but faith does not save. Can faith save? By it we come to Christ, but we come to Him for salvation.

Again, is there no mention in Scripture of buying in connection with our salvation? Doubtless, in the most explicit and emphatic manner. "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire." "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which, when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." "Again the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls; who, when he hath found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters; and he that hath no money, come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk, without money and without price." Poverty is no disqualification, for no

business can be transacted here if we have either "money or price." Assuredly this is strange buying—no other like it. There must be money or price always among us in order to buy; but here is buying without either. What sort of buying must it be? Why any mention of buying when the whole affair is so unlike everything of the kind? Nevertheless there must be some resemblance in the process to buying, otherwise it would not have been thus described. Wherein then does it consist? In this: there is a barter, an exchanging of one commodity for another,—parting with something and having something else in its stead—putting away and receiving in return. And, blessed be God, it is a most convenient as well as a most profitable transaction for us. If we bring to this salvation our darkness, we shall have its light; our poverty, we shall have its riches; our guilt, we shall have its pardon; our misery, we shall have its happiness; our condemnation, we shall have its righteousness; our death, we shall have its life. If we part with what is of no good to us, yea, what will be our everlasting ruin, we shall have what will be our greatest gain for ever; we shall have heaven for our hell. And if this mortifies the pride of the self-righteous spirit, causing it to chafe and murmur, all who are convinced of sin, and feel its guilt and turpitude, gladly welcome the Divine provision to restore us to health as well as to righteousness, and on this account love it dearly. The five hundred talents may thus be forgiven as well as the fifty; "and when they had nothing to pay he frankly forgave them both." And having had much forgiven, they cannot help loving much.

Allow me to ask you ere I close, What do you love most—your sins, or God's salvation? You shall have for ever what you love most. Salvation proclaims, "I love them that love me, and those that seek me early shall find me." God grant that we be all brought to love His salvation!

LAW DEVELOPING SIN.

BY THE REV. EVAN PHILLIPS, NEWCASTLE-EMLYN.

"Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound."—
ROM. v. 20.

THE Apostle begins the present argument in verse 12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin," breaking off here for the time without bringing in the parallel truth. We might have expected him to say, "As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, so also through some other man righteousness entered into the world, and life by righteousness." But no; instead of going straight on to complete the comparison, he turns aside for a while to show the universal and lamentable effects of sin on humanity. St. Paul was sufficiently acquainted with the continent of Divine truth to be able to wander at will in whichever direction he pleased without losing sight of the cardinal points. To put a man unacquainted with a country half a mile from the main road would make his safe return somewhat doubtful. Many are in this state in respect of Gospel truths. Place them a little out of the usual course, the path that has been reddened by the constant tramp of generations, and they

are quite unable to find their way back again. But Paul could venture to take a by-road or a lane to reach a by-purpose, and then return safely to the place whence he started. This involved style of his causes, as Peter says, that many of his writings are hard to be understood.

At the close of the 14th verse he comes again in contact with his main purpose, that the reader might not lose sight of it, and to show that he knew exactly his whereabouts—"who is the figure of Him that was to come." But instead of going on to prove their resemblance, he again digresses to show first their unlikeness. "But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift; for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification." If the free gift were only able to meet the world's misery in respect of the one offence, the "gift" and the "offence" were equal. But mankind have to the first offence added "many offences;" and the "free gift" of God in Christ outweighs this terrible multiplication. Sin has succeeded in making high marks on the walls of the universe, but grace has succeeded in making higher marks still.

In the 18th verse we find him again returning to his chief purpose, namely, to show that the two men—the first Adam and the second—were in one respect similar. "Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon

all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life."

It will be seen that the *offence* stands alone, and, so to speak, in isolation in these sentences. "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound." There was but "one" offence from Adam to Moses, for there was no law to be transgressed, that is, no covenant. God made a covenant with Adam as the representative of mankind; but that covenant was broken in pieces, so that to reconstitute it again was for ever impossible. Man, therefore, had no covenant to break in the period indicated; and man knows nothing historically and experimentally of law outside a covenant. God gave His law to the sea, to the birds, to the animals, and to the fishes, without saying a word to them: they were too small for Him to enter into covenant with them. But man was created on so large a scale that God could not legislate for him without covenanting with him. The "offence," in the Apostle's sense here, was not possible to man in the absence of a covenant. Mankind from Adam to Moses were daily adding to the mass of their corruption, but the offence continued to remain "one" and the same all through.

However, in the time of Moses we find mankind again brought under a covenant—"the law entered." "The law entered that the offence might abound." The words teach that the law entered to develop the evil of the race—to draw out sin. The giving of the law occasioned this; sin could not but be unfolded in the presence of law. But this little word "that," it would

appear, retains its primary and usual meaning—with a view, for a purpose. Not only the giving of the law occasioned the evolution of sin, but caused it. The law entered for the purpose of making sin abound. Let us look upon the law as developing sin in this twofold sense.

I. The giving of the law OCCASIONED the development of sin.

1. *Sin always revives in the presence of law.* “When the commandment came, sin revived.” The pure and fiery light of the commandment awakes it, excites it, and draws out its energies. It awakes like a strong man after wine at the flash of the lightnings and the sound of the thunders of Sinai. Sin in the Israelitish nation had been sleeping during the plagues of Egypt, their departure from the land of bondage, their passage through the Red Sea; and the trials and troubles they encountered during their journey in the wilderness from the shores of the Red Sea to Mount Sinai, only made sin dream fitfully and say an occasional angry word between wakefulness and sleep, just enough to show that it only wanted opportunity to rouse itself and tyrannise more awfully than ever over human nature. But when the nation arrived in the wilderness of Sinai, they received directions to prepare for the marvellous exhibition of the Divine glory which was about to take place. Soon the trumpet sounds, the mountain wears a threatening aspect, the elements grow frightfully wild, and the light touch of the foot of Godhead on the rugged ridge of the mount makes the foundations of Arabia shake. From the midst of the

sublime uproar the law is proclaimed. The people fear, and quake, and beseech that Moses may speak to them, and not God, lest they die. It might have been thought that sin had received such a deep wound that it would never again be able to raise its head while any who were then present were alive, and that the nation, under the influence of the thought of God's wonderful and fearful visitation to it, would sanctify itself more and more through the centuries. But no; listen to the narrative, which is more surprising than the proclamation itself of the law. "They made a calf *in those days*." They worshipped a god of their own make amid the brightness of the Divine Presence. Wonderful! Yes, but it was only the necessary consequence of the giving of the law.

Sin is still the same. The young man is not conscious of the enmity of his heart to God when the commandment does not shine upon his conscience. His enmity is like the match in his waistcoat pocket. There is fire in it, but it is latent fire, fire asleep. It only needs to be brought into contact with something harder than itself to become a flame. It is just the same in respect of the young man: his guilty heart is full of the fire of enmity, but it is asleep. When he comes to rub against God's law and justice, his placid heart will blaze up in hatred dire and intense. The presence of law always makes sin awake, rise, gird itself, and rebel. Sin "takes occasion by the commandment" to develop itself. "The law entered that the offence might abound."

2. The entrance of the law occasioned the development of sin, *because man cannot be developed without developing his sin*. The relation between man and his sin is so

close that it is impossible to unfold him without laying bare at the same time the turpitude of his nature. This principle manifests itself everywhere in the world. If it has unfortunately happened that tares have been sown in yonder field mixed with the wheat, all the influences which promote the increase of the wheat of necessity promote the growth of the tares likewise. The richness of the soil, the heat and the rain, all combine to develop the weeds as well as the pure grain. They are so related to one another that they must be developed simultaneously. If the farmer wishes to see his wheat grow, he must bow to the inevitable and be content for the tares to grow too. Look at the young babe. There is nothing his father and mother desire more than to see him growing in stature and wisdom. Nothing would sooner break their hearts than to behold his growth retarded, without hope of seeing his little hands gaining strength, without sign of the brain beginning to blossom and making his little eyes sparkle with the inner radiance. But what joy it gives the family to witness his gradual development under the dispensation of the cold water and the nourishing properties of the mother's milk. Well, if the little one is to be developed, his sin must be developed with him. As true as he will be a three-foot man he will be a three-foot sinner the same time. Impossible to develop the one without the other. The internal enemies of many a country in Europe in these days—Ireland, for example—would not be nearly as bad, as formidable as they are, were it not for the educational advantages they have enjoyed. The danger and the horribleness of their deeds

increase in the same proportion as their knowledge, and especially their scientific knowledge. In the face of that, were it not better to keep all knowledge from them? Oh no! that is not the method of the Divine Government of the world. The voices of nature, providence, and inspiration teach the contrary. Humanity *must* be developed, though that be impossible without developing its sin. And inasmuch as the law entered to develop man, it of necessity therefore occasioned the development of his sin likewise.

II. The law entered for the PURPOSE of developing sin.
"The law entered that the offence might abound."

I. It entered in order to develop sin in its *heinousness and frightfulness*, so that the evil of its nature as it strikes against God and as it militates against the happiness of God's creation might be made patent to all. There is deceitfulness in sin. It wears a garment so fair and attractive that no creature is free from the danger of being bewitched by it. Its bright and gay attire deceived even the angels of God amid*all the glory of His immediate presence. It captivated our first parents, inducing them to forsake the Paradise of God for the howling wilderness in order to follow it. Sin was having fair weather before the law entered. Only a few entertained doubts as to its respectability and dignity. The earth was sitting quietly under its heavy and torpid authority. But at last there dawned the day of its visitation. In the presence of God's holy law the splendour of its raiment begins to fade; its horrible look makes many refuse it their loyalty any longer. The

terrible fissure in the creation is widening. God's holy creatures—His cherubim and seraphim are on their wings, like frightened doves, hastening to nestle nearer the throne of the Eternal than ever before.

The entrance of sin supposes the entrance of all the dispensation of the Old Testament, which terminated in the advent of Christ Himself, His sufferings, and His death on the Cross on account of sin. And there, on the Cross, was finished the work of stripping sin of all its seemingly beautiful robes. When sin appeared before the law, which could not spare the Only-begotten Son whilst bearing upon Him the sin of the world, it was robbed of the last rag of dignity that clung to it, and thenceforth it stood in all the nakedness of its shame before an astonished universe.

2. It entered for the purpose of *developing its strength*, in order to win a complete victory over it and accomplish its destruction. God is not afraid of sin. It is a source of wonderment how He allowed sin to enter His empire at first, and how He afforded it every opportunity to fortify and establish itself. But he is not, I repeat, afraid of sin. This is the gladdest news that ever fell on the ears of a guilty world—the God who made us is more than a conqueror over our sin.

By the time of the Incarnation sin had been fully drawn out—completely developed. It is probable that corrupt religion could not before, and can never again, produce such a court as the court of the high priest in Jerusalem. There is no hope that Paganism will ever again produce such a faithful representative of itself as Pontius Pilate. Hell will never again see the day when

it can steel and whet a tool so dangerous as Judas Iscariot. By this time sin was fully developed. All the hosts of sin are on the field in the memorable struggle with the Prince of Life, so that the foe can never complain, after losing the battle, that all his forces were not on the spot. All the armies of the kingdom of darkness had confederated together on Golgotha. The story of the battle is known to every Welshman, and of the great victory won that memorable afternoon when He "blotted out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to His cross; and having spoiled principalities and powers, He made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it." Sin still continues the war, it is said. It still shoots, and many of our country's youth are reaped down by its guns. True; but it only shoots to cover its retreat—shoots like a coward, shoots and runs at the same time. Let us therefore take heart; let us arm ourselves with all the armour of God that we may pursue and help to drive it out of the world.

There is a complete victory over sin to every one that believeth in Christ. To refuse to believe is now the only sin that will keep a man out of the kingdom of God. Neither the number of our sins nor their magnitude is to be mentioned beside His merit. We are not afraid to preach abundance of grace. Nothing is so likely to make a man hate his sin as a full view of the infinite grace of God. Well, here is plenty of grace. Let us beware that we abuse it not. We are continually brushing against the Gospel grace, and the mark thereof will be on us evermore somewhere. There is room to fear that some

will be seen with the relics of grace like phosphorus on their robes in the outer darkness, moving like dim lanterns through the deep ravines of the land of unutterable woe.

Let us remember that nothing will cover our sins but Christ's infinite merit. We may forget them for a while. Like a man travelling through a country; a mountain here and there may be seen twenty or more miles off, but many smaller hills have been lost in the distance. So in our journey through the world, an occasional sin we committed stands out conspicuous at the end, perhaps, of forty years, but a million smaller sins have sunk out of sight in the distance. Let us not forget the important truth that we shall be again raised some day to an eminence sufficiently high to see every inch of the way we have travelled. What ought we to do in the face of such a consideration? We ought to cry to God to lift the floodgates of the infinite merit of Jesus Christ, and let the seas of His grace overflow the land we have traversed; and the tops of the highest mountains will soon be covered, and we shall sing jubilantly on the shore, for we shall never see our foes again.

THE GOSPEL A REVELATION.

BY THE REV. W. MORRIS, ST. DOGMELL'S, CARDIGAN.

"Neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."—1 COR. ii. 9.

BY the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him, is here intended the Gospel in the wealth of its blessings, not only the blessings which await them in another world, but also the blessings necessary to their comfort in this. Of these Paul avers in the context that they are such in their nature that man in the strength of reason could never discover them. The eye had seen much, but it had seen nothing like these. The ear had heard much more than the eye had seen, but it had heard nothing to be compared to these. The heart pictures creations greater and more wonderful than the eye has ever seen or the ear heard; but such truths as the Gospel declares never entered it. These truths belong to a higher world; they are the fruit of God's wisdom, His hidden wisdom, His deepest thought. They were thus of necessity a mystery to man, infinitely above his highest soarings, such that the most daring mind in its boldest flights could never guess or conjecture.

I. It never entered the heart of man that these things would come from the SOURCE they did—from God.

Inasmuch as man's ideas of God, through the ages, apart from Revelation, sprang more from his own evil heart than from the clear teaching of Nature, to imagine our salvation would flow from the source it did was impossible to him. After man sinned, he changed God into his own image and likeness—to the image of his own corrupt mind, and to the likeness of his own frail body. That is one reason why the pagan chooses a God of his own colour—why the black man chooses a black god. His conception of God is the deification of his own self, and that as a rule in what is basest in him. The gods of the heathen consequently were perfectly destitute of those properties from which the Gospel blessings could flow—from the Holiest of All the river of life always comes. They were destitute of holiness, a quality entirely lost from the Gentile world, so entirely that no true idea of it existed, so entirely indeed that its very name was missing. In all the literature of the heathen world, a proper word cannot be found to set forth the idea contained in the Bible term "holiness." It is difficult to-day to make the pagan conceive what it really means. His religion, throughout all the ages of its history, has not risen high enough to convey this idea to him, or to produce in actual life a single saint. Heathenism has its heroes, but it has no saints.

The gods were also destitute of love. Inasmuch as purity was lost out of the world, love was also lost—love in its highest sense. Its name also was missing. True, there were words signifying what is misnamed love, but

not the love from which these things could spring. Such a love cannot exist independently of holiness—it is, perhaps, the product of holiness. Accordingly the pagan gods were notorious for their cruelty and their lack of tenderness; for, as with men, the more unclean the more fierce. The idols wore a ferocious look, and in their hands held weapons of destruction. They were objects to cause horror; hence “fear” was the chief characteristic of heathen religions. As a result, the world was without hope, and dense darkness covered the people; for after darkening the sun, whence will come the light? without love, whence will flow mercy and grace? It were easier to imagine light issuing from darkness, or creation from nothingness, than that “these things,” of which the text speaks, should proceed from a fountain so bitter. A merciful and gracious God was to the pagan an improbable, if not an impossible, conception. But Divine Revelation proves that the Dayspring visited us from behind the lowering clouds which seemed full of thunders and lightnings, that the Sun of Righteousness arose with healing in His wings in a quarter that no one ever dreamed of.

II. It never entered the heart of man that these things would come in the way they did.

Every great mind is original. No one can guess beforehand which way he will take to accomplish his purposes. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts, saith the Lord.” The way He took to save the world—by the incarnation of the Word and the death of Immanuel—was so strange, that no one

could imagine or dared imagine it but Himself. That God would come at all within the limits of time and space appeared too contradictory for the human reason to cherish it for a moment; how much more that He would be born a babe and die the cursed death of the Cross! "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness." Not only is it so great that man could not in his own strength discover it, but it is so great that, after being revealed, it baffles man to comprehend it.

Not because it had not had plenty of time and opportunity was the world unable to imagine the Divine method of saving it. The Gentiles as well as the Jews were being prepared for the fulness of time. As the Mosaic economy was preparing the Jew, so nature and providence were preparing the Gentile, and the intellect of the one was being tested even as the faith of the other. God had in view in all the Second Man—all was being made for Him. As the work of the first six days was a prophecy of the first man, so everything subsequently was a prophecy of the second. As in the Roman empire a road was leading from every province to the metropolis, so from every department of nature and providence there is a path to Bethlehem. The light was shining in darkness, but the darkness comprehended it not. The idea was in the world, but the world knew it not. The men to whom the world still looks up, who could penetrate into the secrets of mind and matter with a subtilty unsurpassed before or since, failed to see it. This idea the princes of this world knew not; and, therefore, like every idea truly great, it had to struggle hard to maintain its hold. Though knocking at the doors of poets and philosophers,

yet the reception accorded it was very unworthy. No one divined its message. It was feared by some, and misunderstood by all.

Books are being written in these days to which we see no object save to diminish the originality of the great mystery of godliness. The authors see hints of these Christian truths, they say, in the aspirations of the heathen poets. It is doubtless true that the misery of the world, and the total failure of every scheme to ameliorate it, caused a few thinkers among the most civilised nations to long for a Redeemer; nevertheless they could not, with their particular conceptions of the gods, imagine anything like what we have in the Gospel. The incarnations and sacrifices of the heathen world are but vanity compared with the incarnation of the Word and the death of Immanuel. These ideas stand alone with nothing like them among any nation. They descended from heaven—they could not have ascended from the earth. The aspirations which dimly shone amid the darkness of the heathen world, leaving it darker than before, but more strikingly exhibited the originality of “the things” revealed unto us in the New Testament. When the Gospel appeared, it was so different from anything the Gentile had thought that he deemed it foolishness, and that all who embraced it were weak-minded. And it was so different from everything the Jew had conceived, the Jew who had enjoyed better advantages—advantages indeed that God could not improve on them—that it was despicable in his sight and an offence to him. “We preach Christ crucified,” says the Apostle, “unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness.”

The truth is—the Gospel is so divine a conception that it dazzles the wise of this world into blindness. The wisdom of the wise is destroyed, and the understanding of the prudent is brought to nought, by its brightness, that no flesh should glory in God's presence. His smallest thoughts, His thoughts in nature, perplex man. What then about His great thought, the thought He conceived and brought forth in the silence and solitude of eternity, the thought that will fill with amazement and praise saints and angels for ever? No; it never entered the heart of man that "these things" would come in a way so strange.

III. It never entered the heart of man that these things would come to the DEGREE they did.

Not only man was unable to conjecture beforehand the way God would take to accomplish His purposes, but he was also unable to divine beforehand the contents of those purposes—that they contained a provision ample enough to meet the requirements of all nations without difference. Indeed, Paul considered the fact that Christ was preached to the Gentiles a sufficiently great mystery to be put side by side with the Incarnation. This inability on the part of man is the effect, not of his littleness, but of his wickedness. Sin makes him selfish. This is one of its first and universal characteristics. No tendency sooner manifests itself in men under its sway than that to despise all outside their own clan. Consequently men of old took for granted that they were the representatives of all true nobility; whereas others had grown from the earth like grass, they had descended from the

gods. Hence wars and slavery. After the family developed into a nation, selfishness came to be considered a virtue under the name of patriotism. This constituted the chief virtue of the Gentile world. No law was recognised as between different nations but that of the Welsh proverb—"Let the strong steal, let the weak cry." (*Trecha treisied, gwana gwaedded.*)

The Romans deemed all outside the empire enemies, and believed they ought to be vanquished and made slaves; and once made slaves, they were of less value in their eyes than the beasts which perish. They decreed death as a punishment for killing an ox; but for killing a slave not even a fine was inflicted. Similarly the Greeks judged all outside their own nation to be barbarians, who ought to be robbed and slain. A faithful expression of the national feeling was given by one of their wise men when he said that he was thankful that he was a man, not an animal; a male, not a female; a Greek, not a barbarian. And though one of their great lights rose so high as to picture a republic, where some classes of every nation would be on terms of equality; and though some of their kings strove to bring under one government the various nations of the earth; yet none had taught that every man could or should enjoy the same privileges, religious and civil. The Jews likewise were animated by the spirit of exclusiveness—they deemed all others Gentiles, unclean and worthless. Notwithstanding all their advantages they failed to rise above the nationalism of the old world, and consequently misinterpreted their function in history. "One Jew," taught the Rabbis, "is worth more in the sight of God

than all the Gentiles." "All others who have sprung from Adam are but as spittle," was another of their proverbs. Their prejudice was a wall of separation between them and all other peoples. They could not allow the dogs outside to pick up even their crumbs. The idea of a Missionary Society would be impossible for a Jew to invent. When the Bible was translated into Greek, the Jewish nation considered it a calamity so great as to require a fast-day to be entered in the calendar. The prophets were roughly handled for venturing to predict that the Gentiles would be partakers of the blessing. But for the intervention of Hezekiah the king, the populace would have killed Micah the prophet for teaching it. And we have room to believe that for this very thing some of the prophets were martyred. The Jews were so narrow and blind as to believe that God cared for none but themselves. And rather than think otherwise, the elder brother prefers to be without the feast unto this day than sit down with his younger brother who has lived prodigally—"he is angry, and will not go in."

Thus sin had unfitted men to discover a truth so universal as the Gospel, and even to understand it after being revealed. Notwithstanding that this truth of universality has been impressed on all God's works, and that it was revealed by the prophets in language clear and unmistakable, yet it is a mournful fact that the Jews failed to apprehend it. Indeed, Christ failed to get, not only the Jewish nation, but even His own disciples, properly to lay hold of it. To be told by Him that the Divine love was universal; that all men were children of

the same Father; that He had other sheep which were not of the Jewish fold, but which He meant to bring home; and lastly, that they were to go to all the world and preach the Gospel to all nations without distinction: all this completely nonplussed them. Spite of this minute revelation in words by the Son, the truth would have continued a mystery to them had not God revealed it to them by His Spirit—by His Spirit, not in His ordinary but in His extraordinary influences, and very extraordinary indeed. The outpouring on Pentecost did not suffice. Though it might be supposed that Peter, for example, under its stimulating effects, had an insight into it when he said, "Unto you is the promise, and unto your children, and unto all them that are afar off," yet we subsequently find him so blind to his duty towards those who were afar off as to oblige the Lord to adopt exceedingly novel measures to enlighten him. One day whilst praying—praying, I suppose, for the success of the Gospel—there came upon him a great hunger, so great that he fell into a trance or a deep sleep. We sometimes see more in our sleep than in our waking hours. And he saw the heavens opened, and a vessel as it were a great sheet descending to the earth, wherein he saw all manner of quadrupeds, and wild beasts, and creeping things—a very loathsome sight to a Jew. As soon as he began as it were to withdraw lest he would be defiled, a Voice from heaven came to him, saying, "Rise, Peter, kill and eat." "And he answered, Not so, Lord, for I have never eaten anything that is common or unclean"—I had rather die of hunger than touch creatures so repulsive. The greatness of his desire for the success of the Gospel not-

withstanding, he was not willing to share his privileges with the Gentiles. And the Voice had to repeat to him three times in succession—"What God has cleansed, that call not thou common;" the whole world is now consecrated. A strange way to get a narrow Jew out of his exclusiveness! Revelation after revelation was necessary. "How that by revelation," says St. Paul, "He made known unto me the mystery, that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel."

Though our advantages are numerous and important, yet this truth is not properly understood by many in our day. How slowly great truths make their way in the world! What Celsus taught in the second century is being repeated in the nineteenth, viz., that to suppose that every nation can be brought to worship the same God is absurd. Some still object to a Gospel which destroys all distinctions between class and class, like the lady who made this complaint to Lady Huntingdon against Whitfield's ministry. Some are still reluctant to believe that their case is as bad as that of others, like that genteel congregation which was offended with Wesley for preaching to them from the text, "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" "In Newgate," they remarked, "he ought to have preached like that, not to us." The slave trade is still a force. Though formally abolished, its spirit still survives, and the negro is put under a social and religious ban. All are not willing, even in this age, that the dew of God's blessing should fall outside their little garden. The old objections are even now being revived in certain

circles that to attempt to evangelise the heathen is sheer waste, that they lie outside the scope of the Gospel. Yes, men there are in the nineteenth century doing what Peter said he did once—hindering God, preventing His grace to have free course. Such blind fatuity! The man who would try to stop the clouds to rain and the sun to shine outside the fences of his tiny farm would be looked upon as a lunatic. But his conduct were wisdom itself compared with that of those who consider themselves men of light and leading, who in the vanity of their speculations would leave certain races outside the pale of civilization and salvation. The gift, said Alexander once, is not to be measured by Clitus, but by Alexander. And it is good for the world that the Gospel blessings are not meted out by Jews or scientists, but by the great God merciful and gracious.

Our sin perhaps has more disqualified us to conceive aright of the liberality of the Gospel than of any other feature belonging to it, because our selfishness is so contrary to it. Here God is represented as going out of Himself to succour mankind without difference of clan or race—an act so opposite to the dominant principles of our sinful nature that we are quite unable to mentally realise it. Though reason take the wings of the morning and explore new continents of truth in other directions, it is too much contracted by sin to picture to itself the boundless generosity of the great God. Inasmuch as mercy, differing in this from justice, varies according to the power of Him who hath mercy, seeing that "'tis mightiest in the mighty," as the English poet expresses it, and that God's mercy so

infinitely transcends man's, and that His wings are so spread out as to afford shelter to all the families of the earth, it is impossible for a soul shut up within its own narrow cells, to rise to an adequate conception of it. Even our love is egotistical,—unable to run save on one object, and too weak to accomplish anything unless concentrated on one point, growing thinner as the air in proportion as it grows wider; how then can we conceive worthily of a love sufficiently strong and rich to embrace a world of sinners, without letting go at the same time His hold on the hosts of heaven? No; we must be grounded and bathed first in the love of God in order to rise high enough above the effects of sin to see the breadth and length, the depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.

God's provision for the world is worthy of the high source whence it emanated, and the strange instrumentality whereby it was brought about—in a word, worthy of the infinite love and the precious sacrifice. How limited then must our notions of it be! The old people were endeavouring to determine the extent of the Atonement—they were trying to measure it lengthwise and crosswise. How childish! Can the little shell contain the ocean? Can the worm mete out the earth? Can the finite adequately comprehend the infinite? The Gospel is nothing else than the Infinite Nature in all its boundless wealth adapting itself to the needs of the finite sinful world. There was in Ahasuerus' feast provision worthy of the wealth of the most illustrious king of his day; but there is in the feast on Mount Sion preparation worthy of the Kings of kings and Lord of lords. He has pre-

pared it for all the people—for the Jew and the Greek, for the Englishman and the Barbarian, for the Welshman and the cannibal. To provide for only one nation would not be worthy of Him. Indeed, to provide sparingly for even the whole world would not be according to His custom—plenteousness characterises all His acts. He gives abundance of air for us to breathe, abundance of water for us to drink, abundance of everything save of punishment for our sins—this He carefully weighs. By measure He punishes; by line He judges. Accordingly His grace is measureless—beyond, far beyond, anything we can think or imagine; and He pours it in a continuous cataract on the world, which sweeps away before it all obstacles, and extends itself a fertilising deluge over the world, making the wilderness blossom as the rose, and the desert as the garden of the Lord.

With such fulness of grace in store, I am glad to be able to say that no one, be he who he may and where he may, need be lost. Much grace, it is true, is needed to save one sinner. Not only there must be a sun to illumine all the worlds of the system, but nothing less than a sun would suffice to illumine one world. Not only a great provision was necessary for the salvation of a great multitude, but a smaller provision would not suffice to save one. He who has realised the greatness of his misery knows this. When Jonathan Edwards beheld his misery as infinitude piled on infinitude, ready to sink him to despair, he felt also that something infinitely great was requisite to save him. But notwithstanding the great want of a worldful of sinners, there is here enough for all. This provision is above the laws of

the finite—it is too great to be greater. It does not diminish in the using. The number of those who partake of it makes no difference in it, nor does it lessen the share of each one personally—every one somehow possesses it all. Notwithstanding the number who daily enjoy sunlight, no one feels that his share is thereby diminished. Every one of the myriad creatures which play in the great deep has it all for itself. In like manner, though a great multitude which no man can number has been filled with all the fulness of God, yet the whole fulness awaits the appropriation of each one. There is therefore no danger lest the demand exceed the supply. It often occurs in calamities on sea and on land that many are lost whilst a few are saved, because the provision for escape is insufficient. But no such misfortune can befall those who resort to Jesus Christ for salvation. And though friends are not sometimes able to secure the salvation of their friends, or parents that of their children, yet the defect is not in the Gospel provision. No ; blessed be God, that is worthy of the Provider. Bring your families, persuade your neighbours, compel the whole world to come in—there is room enough to contain them, and provision enough to entertain them. The Gospel is not a small boat sent out to rescue a few of those who are sinking in the sea, but a vessel so great that, if all were saved, there were room yet. Though sin has much abounded, grace has much more abounded—so much more as heaven is higher than earth, and God greater than man.

GOD LOVING HIS SON.

BY THE REV. THOMAS JAMES, M.A., LLANELLY.

"Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I might take it again."—ST. JOHN x. 17.

THE assertions which Christ makes in respect of His relation to God are very different from anything we read of in connection with the prophets of the Old Testament. Many of these held close communion with God, and manifested a kind of holy boldness in approaching Him; but never did any of them dare make the like assertions and use the like language as Christ. Abraham was called the friend of God; but when making intercession for the men of Sodom he acknowledged he was but dust and ashes, and prayed that God would not be angry with him for his boldness. Of all the saints of the Old Testament, Moses perhaps was the most favoured; it was he that was honoured with the highest and most glorious manifestations of Jehovah. He was with Him for forty days and forty nights; but from the cloud and from the midst of fire God spoke to him, a direct revelation he could not endure. But Christ was the only-begotten Son, dwelling in the bosom of the Father; unto Him, therefore, the Father reveals all things. The patriarchs and prophets appeared

before God as servants before their master, vividly conscious of their great inferiority. So terrible was the sight on Mount Sinai, that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." But Jesus Christ never evinced such emotions; when drawing nigh to God in prayer, or when speaking of Him to His disciples, He always showed a quiet consciousness of equality, never did He acknowledge personal inferiority or imperfection. On a special occasion, when speaking of Himself as a servant discharging the duties of a mediator, He says, "My Father is greater than I." But in His prayers He never asks forgiveness nor acknowledges a single fault in His life—perfect as God is perfect.

Not once before the Incarnation do we find any single individual calling God his Father, not even among the children of Israel. Israel as a nation pleads, "Doubtless Thou art our Father, our Redeemer," but not a single believer in that nation was bold enough to use the name. Jesus Christ, however, continually uses it—it is the great word, the keynote, of His life and ministry. "I and My Father are one;" "My Father and your Father;" "holy Father;" "righteous Father," and so forth. If a man appropriated the term, his conscience would accuse him of blasphemy; his moral notions would contradict his verbal asseverations. In the history of Jesus of Nazareth, however, we behold a man repeatedly asserting His equality with God, continually calling Him Father, without being reprov'd by His conscience; His enemies even not being able to convince Him of sin, and more than all—His Father acquiescing in the memorable words, "Thou art My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And

yet this Son dies ; and His Father loves Him for dying. "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life that I might take it again."

In these words Christ seems to found his Father's love to Him on His death, the Divine affections twining around Him because of something He is about to accomplish here on earth. A group of children are playing on the bank of a deep river, when suddenly one of them falls into the water. Just at that moment a stranger happens to pass that way, and seeing the child struggling for his life he plunges into the flood and rescues the little one from a watery grave. The father, on receiving the child alive, testifies to the stranger his gratitude—gratitude too great to be uttered in words—and assures him of his deepest and sincerest love as long as he lives. Well then may the stranger say, "Therefore the father loveth me, because I endangered my life to save his child." Before this there was no acquaintance between them ; this gave existence to the love, this was the origin of the attachment.

Does that exhaust all the meaning of the text ? Was the love of God to Christ procured solely by the death on the Cross ? Was this the origin of it ? Some infer from the words of the text and other similar passages that Christ is not related to God save by moral ties, in virtue of His faithful and spontaneous obedience to His commandments ; they allege that no higher union subsists between them. The graces of His life, the beauty of His character, it was that drew forth the approbation of the Eternal Father. But it seems to me that that was not the meaning of Christ Himself ; His death was not the ground of the union, which union we are taught had no

beginning, for it ever existed. Father and Son are not names given in virtue of some new connection formed in the development of the plan of redemption, but designate an eternal relationship in the Divine Nature. The relation of Father and Son always existed, and as the Son is the express image of the Father the love must be mutual, eternal, and unchangeable. John declares that God is love; but love cannot exist without an object to act upon; it cannot lie dormant in the heart without going forth in act; it is its nature to go out of self in the direction of its object. If that be true, God's love must always have had its object to act upon before the creation of man or angel. Who could that object be if not He of whom it is said that "He was by Him as one brought up with Him, and was always His delight, rejoicing always before Him?" The Bible teaches us that the Son is in possession of all the Divine attributes, and is consequently co-equal with God; therefore God's love to the Son is commensurate with His love to Himself, infinitely greater than it could be to any creature. His moral qualities as exhibited in His earthly life are not the only nor the chief cause of the Father's love to the Son; it was not the death of Jesus for men that originated it, rather did it spring from the essential and eternal union between them. And yet in the text Jesus affirms that the Father loveth Him because He lays down His life. But viewed aright, there is no inconsistency here. Mystery doubtless there is, but mystery is not inconsistency. The text points out a new or an additional reason why the Father loves the Son, without by any means contradicting the eternal love founded in the eternal union,

That this may be the more clearly understood we shall use a plain illustration. Suppose that a king has a son whom he dearly loves ; and further suppose that a portion of the realm is in rebellion against his rightful authority. It were easy for the king to send his armies and destroy the rebels. But he is to leniency inclined, and desires to win them by justice tempered with mercy and make them obedient subjects. For that purpose the king's son goes over to the disaffected province, associates with the inhabitants, suffers dire privations and aggravating insults, and is often in imminent peril of his life, but perseveres to put down the insurrection by forbearance and kindness. At length he succeeds, order is restored, the inhabitants learn obedience, and the country has rest. Well may the king express delight at the prince's conduct, and with propriety might the prince say, "Therefore doth my father love me, because I imperilled my life to save his subjects." The king loved him before as his son ; but here is a new and an additional reason for its continuance, increase, and manifestation.

The idea of our text is something similar. This world was in rebellion against its Maker. The eternal Son became incarnate, dwelt among us, laid down His life, that the world through Him might be saved. Therefore doth the Father love the Son—it is a new reason for beholding Him with complacency. That the Father was well pleased with Christ is clearly seen throughout the whole history. On His entering His public ministry heaven was opened, the Spirit descended on Him, and God audibly testified, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased ;" and again on the Mount of Transfiguration the same voice

is heard repeating the same words with a new emphasis. That He received the approbation of His Father in His sufferings no one will deny. The Father loved Him when the Jews hated Him and reviled Him. God smiled on Him when His countrymen frowned on Him, saying, "Away with Him, crucify Him!" But to approve of a person in suffering and comfort him under crosses is quite a different thing from loving him for it. But here Christ is loved, not despite of it, but for it. "For this the Father loveth me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again." Let us then briefly inquire what were the elements in Christ's death which drew forth the love of God.

I. Perfect spontaneity in the obedience He rendered His Father.

Very far are we from believing that His sufferings and agony were in themselves well-pleasing to God. God delights not in suffering, but forbids cruelty of every description. In providence and grace He proves Himself merciful, full of tenderness and pity. He did not love His Son, because of any delight He had in suffering as such. It was not simply because Christ died, God loved Him. All men die, yea, according to Divine appointment, but God does not love them for this, else the wicked would be loved as well as the righteous. It was not the death as an external act that drew forth the love, but the Divine principle that prompted it, the Divine voluntariness that underlay it, the Divine spontaneity pervading it. "Because I lay down My life. No one taketh it from Me; but I lay it down." His enemies did not snatch it by force; neither was He in a state of docile passivity. His whole

soul was in the act—"I lay it down," and this elevates His death to the rank of sacrifice.

Separate this voluntariness from the death, and you deprive it of all virtue for the redemption of the world, and there is nothing in it more than in some other death to attract the love of the Father. "No one taketh it from Me; but I lay it down of Myself. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again. This commandment have I received of My Father." The wiles and stratagems of His enemies notwithstanding, He could not be touched till the appointed hour arrived for Him to surrender Himself.

His power or authority over His life was twofold. It rested in Him as God. He was not a creature, deriving His existence from another, and depending upon that other for His continuance, and therefore subordinate to him. But He was self-existent, and the source of all other existences. "As the Father hath life in Himself, so also hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself." In what way soever the Father possesses life, the Son possesses it the same way. He had authority or power to do as He wished, to lay it down or not, and to take it up again after having laid it down, without being responsible to any one.

This was also done in accordance with the commandment He received from the Father, that is, according to the Divine plan in the great scheme of salvation, which commandment in no wise deprived Him of the original power He had over His life, but was in perfect harmony therewith, as the Son's will was one with the Father's, and yet perfectly free. Christ laid down His life voluntarily,

of His own free will : no compulsion. Neither Pilate nor Herod, neither the Romans nor the Jews, had authority or power to put Him to death. "I lay it down—no one taketh it from Me." God the Father commands this self-sacrifice, and yet the obedience of the Son is perfectly spontaneous and automatic. There is mystery here which no man can fathom. But mystery or no mystery, Christ of His own free will surrendered His life, and by so doing revealed His Father's will, developed the great plan of redemption, and is therefore the object of God's intensest love. His death was the pure overflow of boundless love, the self-revelation of love in the most glorious manner. His physical death, I mean the death of the body, was nothing in itself; only in so far as it was a proof of the inner feeling was it meritorious; in the inner man dwelt the virtue, in the surrendering of the spirit according to the original plan. This it was, namely, the glorious and holy principle that underlay His death, that drew to Him with renewed intensity the love of His Father, for in the self-sacrifice of the Son the Father beheld His own character faithfully mirrored. Moreover, as has been already suggested, this self-sacrifice was made not only in harmony with the Divine Will, but also in obedience to it. God was intent on saving the world; the plan was drawn; the decree had gone forth that a sacrifice of infinite worth should be made; and seeing this fully realised in the obedience and self-immolation of the Son, God's approbation was won, the Divine love entwined around Him afresh. "For this doth my Father love Me, because I lay down My life."

II. Faith was another important element in Christ's redemptive work, an element which furnished an additional reason why God should love Him. "I lay it down that"—in order that—"I may take it again."

I do not know that there would be any merit or virtue in His death had He sacrificed Himself without any reference or regard to the future, without the strongest assurance of His subsequent resurrection. Such a death would not be a sacrifice to God; it would not be a free, courageous, confident act, an outflow of love, but the result of despair in respect of His own destiny or that of the race. I doubt if the death of Christ could have taken place without His being fully confident beforehand of His rising again. He was holy, harmless, separate from sinners, yea, exempt from sin, perfect in thought, word, and deed; and the death of such an One would not, could not, be permitted in the government of a righteous God but for some adequate purpose, coupled with an absolute certainty that the death would accomplish the purpose in view, and that the Sufferer would rise triumphantly to reap the reward of His passion and blood. During His whole life Jesus Christ was fully conscious of His sinlessness, and challenged His enemies to convince Him of sin. The sweet and unbroken harmony of His life with His affirmations concerning Himself is a certain proof of His inward consciousness with regard to His spotless purity. Knowing therefore that He was sinless, He must have also known that death had no power over Him, for death is the wages of sin.

On the other hand, inasmuch as He knew He was to on the morn of creation is He who hath also shined into

beforehand of His victory over death, by taking His life again. The morning of the third day was as clear before His mental vision as the hour of His crucifixion. He never spoke to His disciples of His death without at the same time alluding to His resurrection. "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples how that He must go into Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day." The taking up was in the divine plan as well as the laying down.

The scheme would not have been fully wrought out, the plan would not have been quite completed, without the taking of life again after having laid it down: He had full confidence the plan would be carried through to the very end. "Therefore the Father loved Him, because He laid down His life *that He might take it again.*" His whole life was a life of faith and love combined. He knew the bonds of death would be loosed, and that it was not possible He should be holden of it. One object of His dying was to destroy him who had the power of death, to destroy him by rising from the dead. He laid down His life according to the plan, with the determined purpose of taking it up again according to the same plan. God therefore commands Him, yea, loves Him because of His faith—because of His full confidence in the successful issue of the plan.

Now, my friends, if God finds a new reason for loving His Son in the moral qualities that Son displayed, think you not He will love us also if we strive to live as Christ lived? Depend on it, wherever He sees men living a life of obedience and self-sacrifice, He will manifest His love to them. The only way to secure His approbation is to

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follow Christ, to imitate the Redeemer, to live with your eyes fixed on the Divine Commandments, to consecrate yourselves wholly to the will of God, to lay down your lives on the altar of the Gospel for Him to use as He thinks fit, trusting Him for the consequences. We should lay down our lives that we may take them again. Our thoughts should revert often to the future. We have an endless future before us ; we determine that future now. We shall be then what we are now. A blessed future awaited Christ because of His obedience, self-sacrifice, and faith ; so there will be to us if we follow in His steps. As evidence of God's love to His Son, look on the honour and glory conferred on Him after His resurrection. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name, which is above every name." "For the suffering of death He is crowned with glory and honour." Such will be the lot of all those who follow Christ's example—they shall be made kings and priests to God. Here they will have tribulation and crosses, yea, they will have to enter the grave ; but for them also there is a third day, a resurrection morn, when they shall take their life again and spend a happy eternity in the presence of God. May this be our portion !

THE FULL ASSURANCE OF UNDERSTANDING.

BY THE REV. JOHN HUGHES, D.D., LIVERPOOL.

"That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ."—COL. ii. 2.

"ASSURANCE of understanding," or "the acknowledgment of the mystery of God," is the chief blessing the Apostle desires to his readers. One reason for this is that they were in danger of being "spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit"—philosophy which was itself vain deceit, a kind of combination of Jewish traditions and Gentile mysticism. Another reason is that this blessing supposes the possession of other spiritual graces; "assurance of understanding" could not be attained but through faith and love.

The believers at Colosse and Laodicea had not seen the Apostle's face in the flesh, and he evidently hints that he was in consequence under a disadvantage in writing to them; they probably explained his strangeness to them as a proof of want of love on his part towards them and of proper solicitude for their spiritual edification. "Why has he not visited us before this? Why, in the frequent journeys he makes, in which he visits other churches more

than once, has he not yet come to us? Is not his neglect of us an evidence that we have less room in his affections than other churches?" But to prevent, if not to erase, every impression of the kind, he assures them with loving wisdom that his strangeness to them was not to be interpreted as a sign of indifference to them or lack of care for them. "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh." He was in "conflict" for them, and the word "conflict" means "agony." Being now a prisoner, he was more concerned about the spiritual prosperity of strangers than for his own comfort and liberty; and his concern for them quickened his imagination to realise more vividly their condition and portray more graphically their danger. In the spirit he saw them as harmless sheep among ravenous wolves; he understood that their own eternal destiny, and God's truth among them, were in imminent peril. "Were I present with them, I could guard them and guide them, expose the devices of the enemy, and arm them to meet his onset. But now, far from them, and unacquainted with the details of the assault and the changing attitude of their own minds, what shall I do? What direction shall I give to my letter? How shall I combine in the right proportion severity and tenderness in addressing them?" The word "conflict," therefore, is the most proper to denote the state of his mind; his soul was in "agony;" he was so straitened that he knew not exactly how to address them; his heart was overflowing with mixed emotions. He now fears, then hopes; he is now in deep and quiet meditation, anon stirred by holy jealousy; the next moment

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melts in tenderness, and then bows the knee before God in prayer and supplication. The counteraction of so many antagonistic emotions—fear, hope, jealousy, anxiety—throws him into mental "agony;" and he now informs his readers of the hard conflict he was in, with a view of preparing them to receive the instruction he meant to impart to them.

He was thus in conflict on their behalf "that their hearts might be comforted;" and there was no way of comforting them without strengthening them, and no way of strengthening them without instructing them. This shows that error is a cause of discomfort. It produces feelings of anxiety and uncertainty in the heart of the individual, and creates jealousies and suspicions in the Christian congregation. If there be room to doubt the steadfastness of the foundation and the walls, the slightest breeze of wind will throw the family into terror; and in like manner will comfort vanish from a Christian Church if misgivings be entertained respecting the foundations of the faith. Since the Colossians were distracted by false teachers, the only way to restore comfort to them was to confirm them in the truth of the gospel. "That their hearts might be comforted, being knit" or joined "together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding." It was necessary to unite them in order to strengthen and comfort them; the element in which to unite them, and in which alone they could be united, was love: a theory may unite minds, and a cause or movement may unite men, but only love can unite hearts. And the object of this union is "all riches of the full assurance of understanding." The combination of so many words

shows that the blessing under consideration is of inestimable worth. The Apostle wishes them to possess an *understanding* in the mystery of God; and more than that—*assurance* of understanding; yea, *full* assurance of understanding. And yet this does not express all his thought: he wishes them *all riches* of the full assurance of understanding; and then, after heaping together so many words, he adds another sentence—"the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." Such an "understanding" must therefore be the fullest and richest, the most penetrating and effectual, this side of that state wherein the saints will see face to face and know as they are known.

Let us look, in the first place, at the knowledge or understanding to which assurance pertains; and, in the second place, at that assurance which perfects the knowledge.

I. The KNOWLEDGE or "understanding" to which assurance belongs.

That men have two kinds of knowledge respecting divine things is manifest: these two kinds are recognised by the inspired writers, and our own consciousness and our observation of our fellow-men agree with the teaching of Scripture. We are acquainted with many who are more or less instructed in the truths of religion; but we also know that there are certain elements in the knowledge of some of them, which make it not only higher in degree but different in kind; yea, that those who are the least versed in the one may possess a good degree of the other, whilst those who consider themselves and are considered by others

to be wise and intelligent may be completely destitute of the higher knowledge. One is the knowledge of the intellect alone: the fruit of study, of investigation, and of judgment, just as natural sciences are. The other is a higher knowledge built upon the former, or the former vitalised, transfigured, and sanctified; it possesses moral and spiritual properties; it pervades the whole man; it baptizes the understanding with feeling, and the feeling with divine influences; it is the product of the love of the heart and of the obedience of the will even more than of the inquiry of the intellect; it is the gift of God rather than the acquisition of man; and because of the riches of its contents, its influence is incomparably deeper on the soul possessing it.

Whilst, however, the two kinds of knowledge are to be distinguished, they are not to be separated; and one danger we are exposed to is, in magnifying the one, to depreciate the other; for if every knowledge is a ray from the Uncreated Light, much more the knowledge of the Holy One. What will secure us against contemning the lower is the consideration of its relation to the higher. It is true that we can possess the lower without the higher, but it is not true that we can possess the higher without the lower. Though it was in the Holiest of All the Divine Glory dwelt, yet the high priest could not enter therein but through the other sanctuary, and only a veil separated between them. Similarly, though the spiritual knowledge is the dwelling-place of the glory, yet the two are parts of the same temple, and the relation between them is such that the knowledge of the intellect is the sanctuary which leads to the Most Holy Place of the spiritual understand-

ing : in the lower—the outer—are found the materials and the objects of the higher. The New Testament speaks of false knowledge—"knowledge falsely so-called." This, however, is not the same as intellectual apprehension of the Gospel. A false knowledge is that which has no external object corresponding to it. Either its objects have no real existence, being nothing more than the creations of the imagination, or its explanations of real existences are misleading and erroneous. Intellectual knowledge of the things of God, on the contrary, is right so far as it goes. For one thing, its objects are veritable objects ; another thing, its apprehension of them is correct—corresponding with their reality. Though it is not adequate, yet it is not therefore incorrect. If it have real objects, and its conceptions of them be true, it is obvious that it cannot be called *false* knowledge, whatever defects may belong to it. On the other hand, it is extremely valuable, unutterably more valuable than any branch of natural knowledge, because of its connection with the highest knowledge of all. It is not to be divorced from the highest any more than the human from the Divine, or the understanding in man from the affections and the will. God's Word avoids everything like false mysticism by laying a strong emphasis on the fact that understanding must precede feeling and willing ; not but that feeling quickens and invigorates the apprehension, but that spiritual feeling is never produced by a species of magic,—that a degree of apprehension precedes it in order to originate it. This undoubtedly is the philosophy of knowledge in the New Testament. It is implied in those words which represent God's Word as the means to engender and increase grace,

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and in the exhortations to consider and seek to understand Divine truths. Faith cometh by hearing, and the hearing which produces faith implies an understanding of what is heard. As John the Baptist went before the face of the Messiah, so this knowledge prepares a people ready for a higher knowledge. This is the window which admits into the soul the light of heaven; and as the room is lighter if the window be large and clear, so also the spiritual knowledge is likely to be more vivid if the natural knowledge of God's things be abundant. The function of the one is to build the altar, arrange the wood, and place the sacrifice on the wood; the function of the other is to bring down from heaven the fire of the Lord to consume the sacrifice. That knowledge therefore is not false which supplies material for the highest knowledge—that presents it with its objects, being thus a necessary preparation for it. Were it false knowledge, it would have been condemned, and our duty were to eschew it; but as the labour for it is commanded, it must be a knowledge of great price.

At the same time, though it be not vain and useless, it is insufficient; and the super-excellence of spiritual knowledge makes it appear pale and poor in comparison. The deepest knowledge of the understanding concerning divine things is after all but very shallow if there be not something more than the understanding in the knowledge. It is superficial in two senses: it does not penetrate down to the heart and the will; it lies on the surface of the mind; it does not fully possess the man, nor lay hold on those powers which rouse, and move, and rule him: and further, it does not pierce beyond the form and outward aspect of

God's truth ; it is not in communion with the majesty and glory of truth. It is superficial in relation to its subjects, and superficial also in relation to its objects, and the latter is the cause of the former. The knowledge of the understanding does not reach down to the other powers—the chief powers of the mind—*because* it does not reach into the glorious essence of God's truth. In every respect it is superficial.

Let us now look at some of the words that explain the nature of the higher knowledge of God, and that show the difference between it and the inferior knowledge. The Apostle Paul says in writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. viii. 1-3)—“ Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.” Though the terms of the contrast in this passage are love and knowledge, yet it is easy to perceive that between two kinds of knowledge the contrast is really made, for as the essence of the higher knowledge love is here viewed. The fundamental element of one kind of knowledge is intellectual apprehension ; the fundamental element of the other is love—love comprehending what the most cultured intellect without love cannot receive. If we be told that to know is the proper function of the intellectual faculty, we answer, Be it so ; still it is evident that there is a universe of objects which this faculty cannot lay hold of unless it be pervaded and saturated with love. If the understanding can perceive the outline and form of Divine truth, through the atmosphere of the heart can it behold its beauty and glory. Contrasting the two kinds of knowledge in their effects, the Apostle says that one “ puffs up,” while the other “ edifies.” The knowledge which is not grounded in love does not terminate in the building up of

the "body" of Christ; it stops within itself; it does not go outside of itself and of the natural and selfish mind in which it inheres; it bears the same characteristics of selfishness as the mind which has produced it, and its influence is as unwholesome as it is selfish—it "puffeth up," filling its possessor with vain selfish thoughts, worse than unprofitable to himself and others. How can a knowledge, which has not love as a factor within it, terminate in an effect which can spring only from love—edification? Such a knowledge therefore is not worthy of the name. It may not be erroneous, yet it is empty and dead, because not filled and vitalised by love. "If any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know." Such knowledge does not possess its object, it is not a medium of true fellowship with the object; therefore it has no assurance; it is nothing more than opinion. On the other hand, "If any man love God, the same is known of Him." This knowledge is real, profound, effectual. You will observe that the Apostle does not say of him who loves God that he knows God. That is what the Apostle John says—"He that loves has known God." But the Apostle Paul connects love towards God with God's knowledge of man rather than with man's knowledge of God. But the two statements are true, and the two in reality are the same. Paul chooses to trace the knowledge to its source in God—*God knows man*. As God's love is the cause of the creature's love, and as the creature would never love God did not God first love him, so also in God's gracious knowledge of the believer is rooted the believer's knowledge of God. The saint's knowledge is but the reflection of the light of

His countenance. Within the sacred circle of communion with God and in the heavenly atmosphere of His love this knowledge receives its being and increase.

We see the same thing in other passages. Look at the Apostle's salutation to his readers in this Epistle (Col. i. 9, 10): "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." Now what do we see here touching the nature of the knowledge we are speaking about? One thing shown is that it is spiritual. The knowledge is wisdom, and the wisdom is spiritual. And it is spiritual in its nature because it is supernatural in its source. It is not like natural sciences, the fruit of genius and study. The wise and the prudent may be destitute of it, and even despise it, deeming it the creation of a childish fancy, whilst the little ones receive it and enjoy the happiness associated with it. Indeed, the consideration that it is love, humility, and obedience—not genius, not study—that give the license to enter its temple, suggests that the supernatural has more to do with its production than with any other kind of knowledge whatsoever. If you possess it, thank the Father of lights for sending His beams into your dark minds; appropriate none of the glory to yourselves; think not that it is your own sagacity that discovered the excellency of the truth; lift a voice of praise to the Eternal Spirit for magnifying before your eyes the things He has revealed in the Word; He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness

your hearts ; from the sanctuary above the Shekinah shot down its beams into your souls ; adore the grace of God, "for so it seemed good in His sight."

And this knowledge is spiritual, as in its source, so also in all other things. It concerns itself with the highest and most celestial aspects of God's truth, which are hid from the comprehension of the natural man ; and its nature is also characterised by a kind of aristocratic delicacy which differentiates it from all knowledges which are of the earth earthy. This knowledge, moreover, is a power which rules the whole man. It is practical wisdom. The Apostle prays that the Colossians might be filled with it, "that they might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." While the knowledge which lodges simply in the understanding leaves the heart and character unchanged, this exerts a living influence on the will, possesses it so entirely as to secure a walk consistent with God's will. It leads to obedience, and continually makes the obedience more complete and perfect—"walking worthy of the Lord unto *all* pleasing." And it should be further remarked that the highest degree of it constitutes the perfection of the religious life. By being filled with the knowledge of God's will we shall be brought to walk worthy of Him, and by walking worthy of Him and bearing fruit in every good work we will grow in the knowledge of Him. It stands at the beginning and at the end. It is the starting-point and the goal, the Alpha and Omega, of holy life. The Christian life begins in spiritual knowledge, and in the same knowledge in its highest unfolding will it be perfected. Higher ground is not attainable in heaven itself die, though sinless, He must have been fully confident

to the blessed family that always behold His face than knowledge of God! The loftiest ambition of St. Paul himself was—"to know as I am known."

The same characteristics are to be seen in other passages. One additional example must suffice us for the present. The Apostle says in saluting the Philippians (i. 9-11)—"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ." Here again, love seems to be the chief element in the knowledge. The tree grows in height and girth, and so love grows in "knowledge and in all judgment." It may indeed grow in other respects and other directions; and such is its nature that it grows in warmth of feeling and constant self-denying labour; but the growth the Apostle desires for the love of the Philippians is growth in knowledge. The nature of the knowledge is shown in the words following—"and all judgment" (Welsh, *all sense*); by which is meant holy sensibility, spiritual tact, not unlike, in its character and operation, the bodily senses. Spiritual knowledge is a kind of new sense in the soul, enabling it, as it were with the rapidity of instinct and almost with its accuracy, to judge between the true and the false in doctrine, and the lawful and unlawful in morals. The saints are not all possessed of a mind naturally strong to judge and discriminate; many of them are obtuse enough in respect of the affairs of this life; not one in a hundred of them is thought competent to sit in judgment on intricate questions relative to commerce, statesmanship, and science; they are unskilful in argument, and have never

exercised their minds in abstract inquiries. Nevertheless, their love of God is knowledge, their knowledge is sense, and their sense resembles the smell, the taste, the touch more than the other powers. It is like the ear of the trained musician discerning one discordant note among a thousand voices; or the taste of the delicate, not only able to discriminate between the sweet and the bitter, the pleasant and the sour, but to pronounce upon the different degrees of the agreeable. This perfection, perhaps, in knowledge or sense is what is intended in the next sentence—"that ye may approve things that are excellent." A knowledge as refined as this is not necessary to separate the right from the wrong; the moral feeling of the natural man may do that. But to differentiate between the varying degrees of the good and to approve the more excellent; to trace the minutest lines of perfection, to see the most modest and sensitive beauties of the Christian character, of whose existence the great body of men in every age have no clear conception, and to see them in such a way as to covet them, and labour assiduously to possess them,—to do all this requires this knowledge in its highest degree; we must have "sense," yea, "*all* sense."

Such is the knowledge of Divine things which rises to assurance. Assurance is the natural result of the combined elements necessary to its nature. A knowledge so full, so rich in its contents, which pervades all the powers of mind, and is in so close commerce with its objects, and which, consequently, is so strong a force in the life of its possessor, cannot but impart the highest assurance.

II. The ASSURANCE belonging to the knowledge. The

assurance corresponds to the knowledge, and the knowledge itself in a high degree of efficiency constitutes the assurance. The assurance is not a property added to the knowledge, but the cream of the knowledge itself; and the higher and more extensive the knowledge, the stronger the assurance. Some Christians, we know, have an assurance which to some measure at least is the result of study and inquiry. Through assiduous perusal of religious books and close observation of the effects Christianity has had on the history of the world, they "know the certainty of those things wherein they have been instructed," "and are ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them with meekness and fear" (Luke i. 4; 1 Pet. iii. 15). They are fully persuaded that there is no book so pure, so sublime, so comprehensive in its contents as the Holy Scriptures. They know without a doubt that the religion of Jesus is based on facts such as no other religion can show, that it is the only religion which meets the wants and aspirations of the spirit, and that no other religion has similarly succeeded in the face of the thousandth part of the hindrances on its way, nor proved itself so fitted to every age and every nation. They are sure that among the sons of men there is no character that will bear comparison for a moment with the Man Christ Jesus, and that the appearance of such a character among sinners is a wonder amid wonders; and yet that the power to invent it were a greater wonder still: the former explains itself whilst the latter is utterly inexplicable.

Yet it must be confessed that this assurance—the assurance which is the result of study and investigation—

is not possessed by all the saints; they are not all able to impart this assured knowledge to others concerning things in which they have been but imperfectly instructed themselves. But nevertheless they are not without assurance. They have assurance of the greatest value to themselves. It is *personal* in its essence. Reasons can be circulated, but intuitions and experiences cannot be thus transmitted. My neighbour must see with his own eyes and feel in his own heart what I see and what I feel in order to partake of the same assurance. The highest assurance of the believer is the result of vision, of intuition. It springs from the fellowship of the soul with eternal realities, and the impressions these realities make on the soul. It is a revelation on the one side and an intuition on the other. "I am He," said Christ to the woman of Samaria. "He told me all things that ever I did," reported she. "We heard Him ourselves," replied the Samaritans. "The acknowledgment of the mystery of God," this assurance is called in the text. Such an impression is made on the soul of the believer that it could come from nothing save the great realities of the unseen world. One day in the camp of Israel were seen bunches of grapes, of pomegranates, and of figs, borne upon a staff between two men. Whence, pray, have they come? Oh, it is easy to answer that: from the valley of Eschol in the land of Canaan, the other side of Jordan. It were idle for the most critical unbeliever in the camp to have asserted the contrary. Such luscious ripe fruits grew not in the wild howling wilderness, where there was neither garden nor vineyard, nor sowing nor reaping. From the land of rivers and streams, the land of vines and pome-

granates, were the grape-bunches undoubtedly brought. In like manner it is vain to assert that the hope which purifies the heart and gives joy in tribulation—that the joy which comes through believing, “the joy unspeakable and full of glory”—that peace of conscience and tranquillity of spirit—can spring from this world. Such graces are not like anything this world grows. The Christian’s intense yearning to be in the likeness of God—to be holy even as He is holy—belongs not to the same class as the aspirations of the children of this world. The image of the invisible world is stamped on the desire. It must have proceeded from another and a better world. It was some incomparable loveliness, the like of which cannot be seen among the beauties of the creation, that, revealing itself to the soul, engendered the yearning within it, and the character of the yearning carries within itself the proof that it will be fully satisfied some day; indeed, there is virtue in the yearning itself to effect in part its own accomplishment. It is evident, we think, that the things which cannot be seen are the true realities, for there is more force in the impression and the effects they leave, more of purity and sublimity and power in the graces they produce, than in the effects the things of this world have on the mind—things that are none other than shadows that flee, without possessing true existence; and the happiness they give is empty and vanishing like themselves.

This shows that the assurance of which we speak is twofold. Besides being a full persuasion of the mind within, it is also a proof of the existence of the objects without. It is the impress of God’s seal on man’s soul—the yea and amen in the heart of the believer as an echo of God’s yea

and amen in the testimony. The inward assurance is a proof of the existence of the objects and a reflection of their nature: it is communion through faith with the objects that originates and nourishes it. It is not, therefore, like the assurance of credulity or lunacy, which is a proof of nothing beyond the state of the mind cherishing it, and which is verified by nothing external to the mind itself. It is not the assurance of a man in a dream, which one minute of wakeful life dissipates. This assurance it is impossible to explain without going outside and beyond the mind which experiences it. It could not arise from the man himself—it is in perfect harmony with all the environments. It is the assurance of *understanding*. Not one atom of fanaticism belongs to it; the clearest and ripest judgment cannot show any weakness in its foundation; and to compare its effects to the effects of the strong confidence sometimes begotten by superstition were none other than blasphemy. Even in view of eternity and the judgment, when the persuasion entertained by the believer is so different from the fancies indulged in by the superstitious as are the thoughts of the wise from the creations of the madman, this assurance remains, and gives the soul more strength and peace than it ever did before.

*REASONABLE SERVICE.**

BY THE REV. PRINCIPAL EDWARDS, M.A., ABERYSTWYTH.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."—ROM. xii. 1.

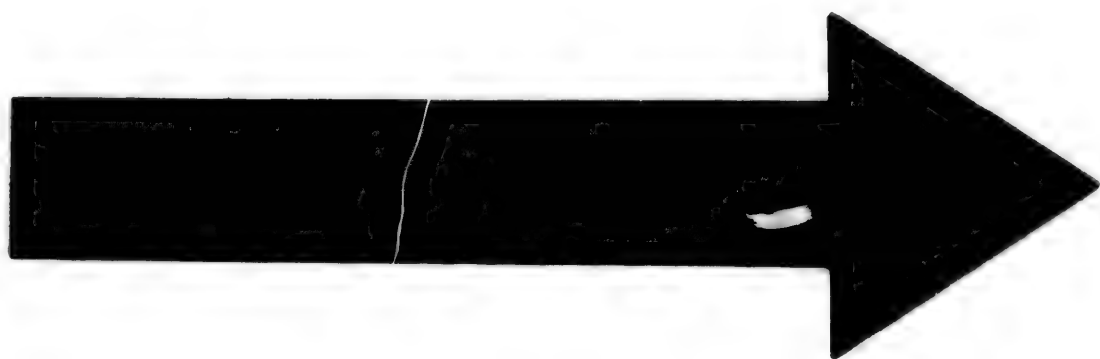
LET us first have a word of explanation upon the words at the close of the verse—"your reasonable service." It is natural to suppose, at first sight, and indeed the explanation is given by many expositors, that the word "reasonable" here means that it is not an unreasonable thing, but on the contrary proper and becoming, that we should present our bodies unto God. It is a service which God may reasonably expect at our hands. That is true, but it is not the meaning of the word in this verse. The word rendered "reasonable" here occurs only once besides in the New Testament, and there it is translated "spiritual." It means what belongs to the reason, and appertains to the mind, as distinct from the belongings of the body—mental; belonging to the intellect and thought, not to any external or ceremonial law. Hence reasonable service means the service of reason, the service of mind. "I

* It is but right to add that this is only a report of a sermon delivered by the Rev. Principal at City Road Presbyterian Church, Chester.—ED.

beseech you to present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God, which is the service of your thought, the service of your intellect."

The word "service" too is somewhat ambiguous, to say the least. It does not here mean service in the sense of ministering to the wants and obeying the commands of a master, but service in the sense in which we use the word when we speak of "divine service."

When the word "service" is used in a Scriptural sense, it means the service of worship; and reasonable service will therefore mean the worship of mind—the worship of thought, intellect, a worshipping mind approaching God. "I beseech you that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, which is the worship of your minds." If that is the meaning, and there cannot be much doubt that it is, the expression "reasonable service" seems to stand in contrast to the word "body" in the middle of the verse. "That ye *present* your bodies." What you present is the body, but it is the *worship* of your mind. You present your body; you worship with your mind. In the act of presenting the body there is the act of worship in the mind. In the act of worship in the mind, there is the act of self-consecration in the body. A presentation of something to God in worshipping God. That ye present your body which is the worship of your mind; as much as to say, on the one hand, that no act done by the body is worship, is service, is acceptable unto the Lord, unless accompanied by an act of mind—an act of thought. God cannot be pleased with any external act, unless that external act represents an internal resolve, an internal desire, an internal act. "That ye present your bodies, which is the worship of your mind."



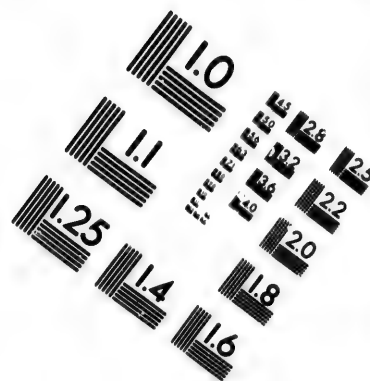
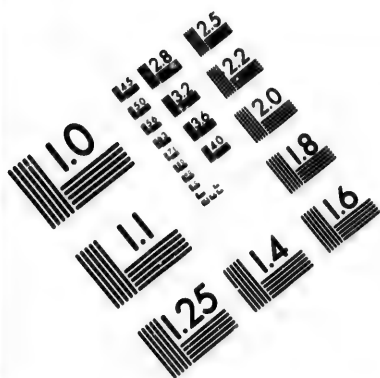
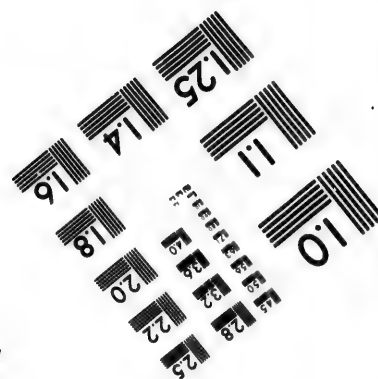
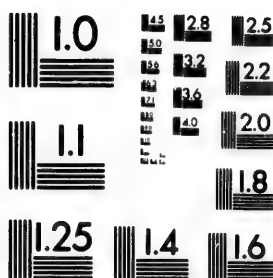


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A little consideration will lead you to believe that it must be so. Every thoughtful mind rises above being satisfied with any external rites and ceremonies. Suppose the expression of our love to our dearest friends were a simple ceremony done outwardly, but not representing any inward feeling, it would be worthless. If man is dissatisfied with empty rites and meaningless ceremonies, how much more God! How dissatisfied must an Infinite Being be with a religion which consists in ceremonies and rites that do not represent the inward thoughts and feelings of a person! That is on the one hand.

On the other hand, the words imply not only that no external act can satisfy God which does not represent thought and feeling—a conscious worship, but also that no feeling towards God is adequate worship, even granting that it is true worship. It is not complete worship; it falls short of the highest form of worship unless it takes the form of self-presentation, an external act of giving oneself up to God. There must be the presentation of the body to perfect the worship of the mind. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, which is your reasonable service.”

Shall we say it is doubtful if man can worship at all except in body? I feel a doubt whether it is really possible for man to worship unless in an act of the body; and if that is true—I do not say it is—but if it is, the disembodied spirits of the saints in heaven have some kind of vesture, which we may not perhaps call “body” in the material sense of the word, with which they are enabled to worship God. Perhaps we may go further, and say with one great writer, “the only naked spirit is the Infinite

Spirit Himself." It is quite certain there is no worship complete and adequate in the highest form except in a bodily act, an external act of self-presentation before the Lord.

Thought is of practical importance in our days. But thought is not worship. Study is not religion. Meditation is not what you mean by true godliness. There may be meditation without one iota of worship. There must be something more than thinking of God, than admiring the greatness of God's works, than even acknowledging that God is kind. He is in your thoughts, and thoughts and feelings may take the form of worship; but if worship does not mean anything more than that, there is no difference between our feelings towards God and our feelings towards God's creatures. We acknowledge the greatness of a man. We bow down before moral greatness. We acknowledge that other men are better than ourselves. They can even master our spirits, they can handle our souls as they please, command them to go, to stand, to advance. We are entirely under the control of the master spirits of the world; but surely there must be some radical difference in kind between our most profound admiration of man and our worship of God; therefore the highest and best form of worship must include something quite different in its very nature—different from a mere acknowledging that God is what He reveals Himself to be. To admit that God is good, to confess that He is infinite, does not come up to the idea of New Testament worship. Well, what more does that require? What we have in this verse—"I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your

bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

The essence of worship is self-dedication ; the perfection of worship is entire self-sacrifice, and we cannot sacrifice except in the body. The Lord Jesus Christ Himself is the best example of this great act of worship, and I wish to impress it upon you, because it is important that we should all be continually, every day, doing this one great spiritual act of spiritual consecration externally—not internally only. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is the best example of this. He loved us from eternity. There was no sacrifice in His love ; because there was no sacrifice, there was no merit ; because there was no merit, there was no salvation. There was infinite compassion, not an atom of salvation. Love as great as God's love ; self-denial less than the self-denial of any one of us. Now what must He do in order that His love may take the form of self-sacrifice ? What must the great and Infinite Son of God do in order that He may be capable of sacrificing Himself for us ? He must take the body of man. He must become man. He must live on earth. He must put Himself in the position in which we now are, and be able in the body to do bodily acts, and these bodily acts of suffering and dying will enable Him to sacrifice Himself. Externally considered, this is a very small matter. You see Him born in Bethlehem—scoffed at, persecuted, agonising in the Garden, and at last dying on the Cross. Judged from the world's point of view, that is not a very great thing. He is not even a hero as the world has judged heroes ; He does not take a place among the men of renown in the world's history. There are many higher than He on the

ladder of eminence. He never fought a battle, He never shed any one's blood, He never made Himself master of any school of philosophy, introduced no new theory as to natural laws and truths. What did He do? He simply lived a perfect life—a life of kindness, philanthropy, even at the cost of suffering and dying; and He did die a shameful death—trampled under foot instead of being placed upon an eminence and worshipped. That was the life of the Son of God. What a small thing it was as the world judges! To die is not a great thing externally. Little children do it. Old men do it. Poor people do it. Ignorant people do it. Creatures who have no souls do it. The finishing of this life—doing away with all that concerns business—is done every day, and no one looks upon it as anything great. Yes; but in that small act of dying on the Cross, the Infinite Son of God was able to do the very same thing as the little child did in that cottage. He was able, in that simple act of giving his body to death, to do the greatest moral act, the greatest spiritual self-sacrifice that was ever done on this earth—a greater act than was ever done from all eternity. He will never do anything greater nor so great again. He was the God-man for us. He could not do this unless He became man, unless He suffered and died. He created the worlds from His throne in heaven; but something greater than creation is here. He died, and in dying showed how the infinitely rich became the infinitely poor, the infinitely great became the infinitely small, the infinitely powerful became the infinitely weak, and how He who is the Fountain of Life sacrificed His own life for others. He could not do it unless He died. Now that is

the highest act of worship. There is nothing greater possible to any angel in heaven than that which Jesus did. That was worship. Good men do it. Very good men do it often. They are not satisfied with meditation, their religion does not consist in thinking. Have you ever read the biography of Jonathan Edwards of America, one of the greatest intellects God ever created, I should think? I do not know of any man in history that possessed a stronger grasp of profound principles of thought; and that man was a Christian preacher; as simple as a little child, willing to be the smallest in the church. If you read his life you will find that when he was a student at college, just opening to the great realities of Christian life and consecration, he wrote out a covenant between himself and the Lord, and he gave himself in all that God had made him, for time and for eternity, absolutely, unreservedly, unconditionally, to be the Lord's servant. I actually read of one good man who, in order to impress his soul more vividly, ripped open his arm that he might write the covenant with his blood. I do not ask you to do that, I did not do it myself; but I wish to impress upon your mind and heart more and more that true worship, true religion, consists not in thought, not in criticism, not in preaching, but in continued acts of self-denial and sacrifice to the service of Jesus Christ. How can I do it? you ask. If that is religion I know nothing of it. How can I do it? This verse is written on purpose to teach us how. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies living sacrifices, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service."

All the expositors grant that this is the beginning of

the second part of the Epistle to the Romans. As you well know, you can divide every Epistle of Paul's into two parts—the doctrinal part and the practical part: the proof of a great principle and the application of that great principle. The Apostle Paul never teaches a doctrine for the sake of the doctrine. The most fundamental truths of our religion are always proved and taught in the New Testament for the sake of practice. Theology exists for religion, not religion for theology. On the other hand, the Apostle Paul works out his practical lessons on the great principles of Christian religion; and so here. The doctrine is plain and the lesson too. The doctrine of the Epistle to the Romans is justification by faith, the practical lesson of the Epistle to the Romans is self-consecration to God.

If you look carefully through the chapters, from the beginning of the twelfth to the end of the sixteenth, you will find that all the lessons taught in the latter part of this epistle are contained in this verse, and in one word of this verse,—presentation of the body as a sacrifice to God. Sacrifice: what is the connection between the two—justification by faith and sacrifice of self? Let me try to explain, if the Spirit of interpretation be given me. For a few moments let me try to translate justification by faith into everyday language, though I do not want to change the term nor a word. It is a grand term. Justification by faith has shaken Europe, and will again! What is the meaning in the shape and the form of the language which we speak to one another day by day? It means that a man is profoundly convinced that he is a sinner. He is filled with shame in the presence of God. That shame is the beginning of self-sacrifice. I am convinced,

after a good deal of thought, and, I venture to add, from reading my own spiritual experience—I am convinced to-day that there will be no self-sacrifice in our religion unless it springs from a deep, lasting realisation within us of our sinfulness and our shame before God. There are other things, plenty of them, to make us feel that we are small, but they do not create self-sacrifice. We are small in space. How very small is our position and life in the great universe! Really we cannot be proud. An undevout astronomer must be mad. How small we are compared with the vast expanse of the earth! How small compared with the stars! Herschel, looking one day at the nearest fixed star Sirius, which has a larger sun than our sun, and yet so far that it is not a star of the first magnitude—he was looking beyond it, or by the side of it, and he saw at one glance five hundred stars in a straight line, every one of which was further from the nearest to it than that star from us. He increased the power of his glass, and at last he thought he had seen the farthest star of all—nothing but blank darkness beyond; and he made a map of the universe. Herschel, looking at his map, seeing where the end was here, and where there, increased the power of his telescope, and to his astonishment, beyond the darkness, he saw the glimmering of another creation again. How small we are! How small in time! The great era of history; the geological record before that; and eternity before that again. What is seventy years? How small we are! How infinitesimal; and yet I never felt I ought to deny myself for the sake of the world. I do not see that I ought to consecrate my whole being to the stars, if after all I am greater than they. I can weigh them in

my scales—they never weigh me. I can count them on my fingers, I know their distance, their names, their secrets are open before my eyes; they cannot count us or weigh us. We are greater than they.

Rise to the higher world, for there is a higher world, and try to realise the greatness of thought. How small is man compared with the truths, the great truths, of God's intellect! You and I think them. They are within our mind this moment—uncreated ideas, which God never made. They lived and lodged and nestled in His bosom from all eternity, and were the objects of His meditation and delight. How small am I compared with the vastness and the greatness of truth, and yet there is no worship of truth, no self-consecration to truth. It has been said there are martyrs for truth. I venture to doubt, even to disbelieve the assertion. Naked truth, mere abstract ideas, will never create love and self-sacrifice. You cannot love an action, or die for an idea. No man ever did it, not even Socrates at his best. There is something laying hold of the affections greater and better than ideas.

Rise once more; let your imagination carry you higher even than the loftiest ideas, the greatest conceptions of God's mind, and what do I see? I see something quite different—the law—moral law, greater than ideas, looking upon me with authority and commanding me to submit myself to its omnipotence, telling me that there is an eternal difference between being good and being bad; that there is a greater difference between goodness and evil than there is between the greatest and the least creature in God's universe. That is a difference which can be well enough applied; and now in the presence of

this awful power which lays hold of my inmost being and commands me to obey it, and in the light of God's Holy Spirit shining into the inmost recesses of my conscience, what is the result? Oh, I am ashamed of myself before God's law. I cover my face with my hands. I wish the mountains would crush me out of my very being, and that is the beginning of self-sacrifice.

O young men, let me impress it upon you, the real foundation of self-consecration is the belief and the realisation that we are evil and sinful in the sight of God.

Then, in the second place, justification by faith means that you and I realise deeply, that we are profoundly convinced, that our only salvation is in trusting God. Trust not works. Trust not competition. Trust not your own struggles for eminence and supremacy. Simply trust in the unchanging goodness of God. A new doctrine, Christian truth, revealed for the first time by Jesus Christ, and lived by Jesus Christ. I do not say that He was justified by faith in the same sense that you and I are; but if any man ever lived a life of faith, and if any man ever conquered by faith, it was the suffering Jesus, who died the death of shame and conquered by doing so. The Apostle Paul realised that great truth. That is the secret of this man's apostleship. That is the key to unlock this man's mystery. It is the explanation of his spiritual life. He felt convinced, when he was conquering himself and his pride and the world, he was able thus to conquer through simple trust. I met a friend the other day, when we spoke of religious matters,—and I was pleased to hear it from his lips, because I feared whether it was realised in the present day,—he said, "I was for years and years

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going regularly to the means of grace, and doing all that I could for the cause of Christ, from a desire to gain something for myself in doing it. I wanted honour in the sight of man. I wanted a conscience void of offence before God. I wanted to be able to say my prayers every night with a feeling that I had done my duty. I tried my best to find peace by working, but I could not find it. I was miserable, restless, yearning for something which I had somehow never experienced. Some old friends told me the only way was to go to God, taking nothing, doing nothing, but casting myself entirely and absolutely on His grace. I tried the plan, and from that day to this I have found peace, I have conquered sin, I am conquering it every day. I know of sins I have conquered, and I know of sins that are weaker though not yet dead; the world is becoming unreal, and the great eternity before me is assuming the shape of reality—the only reality, filling my thoughts constantly.” Words to that effect my friend spoke. My dear friends, young men, in the realisation of that great Christian truth is our only hope of conquering sin, of conquering self—in trust. Not in competition, not in aiming at being better than others, not in a religious ambition for happiness, but simply in casting ourselves entirely on God, and realising that we fight with the weapons of God, and conquer with the omnipotence of God. It is in that that I see the possibility and the progress of self-sacrifice and self-consecration.

And then, oh! how easy it is to say, “Thy will be done.” That is worship. Not singing hymns with a loud voice and a hardened heart; not uttering words of prayer with wandering thoughts; not gesticulations and appearances

before men, but a profound, calm, deep readiness to say, "Thy will be done." How easy that is for a man who feels that his eternal salvation consists in trusting God. How easy for the man who unreservedly trusts Him to leave the children to Him, and, when the children die, to say, "Thy will be done;" to wipe away the tears and say, "Thy will be done." How calm we should be if we realised this implicit trust and left all our circumstances to Him! Rich or poor, in honour or obscurity, courted or despised, living long or dying soon, it matters nothing to the man whose whole being is grounded and rooted in *unbounded trust* in the love of God. Oh, my dear friends, whenever unbelief and self-seeking trouble you, try to believe that your whole salvation consists in trusting God; and may He keep you in the bond of peace through this loving trust for ever.

THE END.

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